

BEYOND PUBLIC SPACE

NEGOTIATING POWER FOR PUBLIC-MAKING IN DOWNTOWN CAIRO

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**BEYOND PUBLIC SPACE: NEGOTIATING POWER FOR
PUBLIC-MAKING IN DOWNTOWN CAIRO**

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ABSTRACT

Since the Egyptian revolution in 2011, two main processes have attracted attention in urban research. The first could be observed in the ways conventional public spaces, e.g. main squares, were temporarily used for protests and art performances. In this regard, academic literature was rather limited to the temporal reclamation of Tahrir square and the surrounding streets. The emergence of new urban practices in Cairo, instigated by the revolution, led to a second stream of debates that focused on Cairo post-2011. This invited different readings on the new ways of social engagement to revolutionize urban space production in Cairo post-2011. Despite the variety and enriching dialogs these studies offer, yet, the reading of this emerging phenomenon in Cairo is premised on a rather inflexible conceptualization of public space. Cases in the context of Cairo, offer the possibility of adding to debates on ‘the right to the city’ and ‘reclaiming public space’, by expanding the concept of public space beyond conventional views, towards an understanding of it as a process; intrinsically contingent to the context of its production.

Thus, this research focuses on how the revolution was a catalyst, whereby a new mode of practice is influencing the production of *publicness* in urban space. Here, the concept of public space has a limited adherence to the conventional divide between public and private, for it obliterates the intricacy of these concepts, not only from a feminist point of view but also with regard to the Arab/Muslim context. The aim of this research is to explore how young middle class-led initiatives in Cairo make use of the potential attributes of space, both human and non-human (Latour, B. 2005), for various ways of *public-making* (Iveson, K. 2007), thus providing an in-depth understanding of how power of space is differently negotiated by various *publics* in Downtown Cairo.

KEY WORDS

Public space; Public-making; negotiating power relationship; urban activism; process-based interventions; spatiality of *publicness*

Zusammenfassung

Seit der Ägyptischen Revolution im 2011 haben zwei Hauptprozesse in der Stadtforschung Aufmerksamkeit erregt. Die erste könnte in der Art und Weise beobachtet werden, wie konventionelle öffentliche Räume, z.B. Hauptplätze, wurden zeitweise für Proteste und Kunstaufführungen genutzt. In dieser Hinsicht beschränkte sich die akademische Literatur eher auf die zeitliche Reaktivierung des Tahrir-Platzes und der umliegenden Straßen. Das Aufkommen neuer urbaner Praktiken in Kairo, ausgelöst durch die Revolution, führte zu einem zweiten Strom von Debatten, der sich auf Kairo nach 2011 konzentrierte. Dies lud zu verschiedenen Lesungen über die neuen Wege des sozialen Engagements ein, die urbane Raumproduktion in Kairo nach 2011 zu revolutionieren. Trotz der Vielfalt und der bereichernden Dialoge, die diese Studien bieten, basiert die Lektüre dieses in Kairo aufkommenden Phänomens jedoch auf einer eher unflexiblen Konzeptualisierung des öffentlichen Raums. Fälle im Kontext von Kairo bieten die Möglichkeit, Debatten über das „Recht auf Stadt“ und die „Rückeroberung des öffentlichen Raums“ zu ergänzen, indem der Begriff des öffentlichen Raums über konventionelle Sichtweisen hinaus auf ein Prozessverständnis erweitert wird; intrinsisch abhängig vom Kontext seiner Produktion.

Daher konzentriert sich diese Forschung darauf, wie die Revolution ein Katalysator war, wodurch eine neue Praxis die Produktion von Öffentlichkeit im urbanen Raum beeinflusst. Das Konzept des öffentlichen Raums hält sich hier nur begrenzt an die konventionelle Trennung zwischen öffentlich und privat, da es die Komplexität dieser Konzepte nicht nur aus feministischer Sicht, sondern auch im Hinblick auf den arabisch-muslimischen Kontext auslöscht. Das Ziel dieser Forschung ist es zu untersuchen, wie junge, von der Mittelschicht geführte Initiativen in Kairo die potenziellen Attribute des menschlichen und nicht-menschlichen Raums (Latour, B. 2005) für verschiedene Wege der öffentlichen Gestaltung nutzen (Iveson, K. 2007) und liefert damit ein tiefes Verständnis dafür, wie die Macht des Raumes von verschiedenen Öffentlichkeiten in Downtown Kairo unterschiedlich ausgehandelt wird.

SCHLÜSSELWÖRTER

Öffentlicher Raum; Öffentlichkeitsarbeit; Verhandlungsmachtverhältnis; städtischer Aktivismus; prozessbasierte Interventionen; Räumlichkeit der Öffentlichkeit

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CHAPTER 01

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation and problem statement

Although it has been almost a decade since the 2011-revolution in Egypt, nonetheless, the implications of this political event on the further development of Downtown and Cairo in general, are still being written and re-written. Debates about the factors that led to the revolution in 2011 are beyond the scope of this research, nonetheless, it suffice to say that struggles to seek social justice and freedom of expression including but not limited to fighting corruption and the adoption of neoliberal and “*laissez faire*” policies that amplified the urban crisis in Egypt, played a significant role, leading to the Egyptian revolution in 2011 (Ibrahim 2014). Among a wide range of discussions, regarding the interplays of this event, many accounts were concerned with the ways public space has been used, reclaimed and transformed, as well as the type of urban space it produced - denoted as “*localized war zones*” (Abaza 2013) “*Spaces/squares of change and anger*” (El Kadi 2014) and “*free people’s republic of Tahrir*” (Elshahed 2011).

In furtherance of this debate, scholars described how the revolutionaries reclaimed the public space after being controlled by the state for decades (Abaza 2014; El Kadi 2014; Dana 2013; Attia 2011; Elshahed 2011). Such confrontations were physically manifested in various ways. The occupation of Tahrir square with tents and camps, gathering various social groups and classes, who would not co-exist under different circumstances (El Kadi 2014; El Shahed 2011). The absence of state control during this time, gradually led to the rise of a “*new public culture of protest*” (Abaza 2013, p.126), expressed in multifaceted forms, including the emergence of temporary artistic urban activities (e.g. art and music performances). In this regard, scholars argue, “[t]hese were ultimately about the competition for public visibility and conquering public space “(Abaza 2014, p.3). It is argued that the events that took place in Tahrir square in 2011 transformed the idea of

public space among Egyptians. Studies elaborate on how the ‘Arab spring’ has transformed the public spaces, particularly the main squares, into a ‘Greek Agora’, a space for contestations and resistance of exclusions; a space ‘open for all’ in order to practice freedom of expression (El Kadi 2014). Provided that, since 1935, Tahrir square has long been a place for political protests and witnessed numerous uprisings through history, yet, after the 1952-revolution, the state restricted the use of the square to function merely as a node for traffic. In that sense, the events of the 2011-revolution gave Tahrir square back to its people (El Kadi 2014; El Shahed 2011).

Encouraged by the enthusiasm instigated during the events of 2011 and their hope for change, to act on long term initiatives, not only in Cairo but across a number of Egyptian cities such as Alexandria, Port Said and Mansura (Abaza 2017; Ibrahim 2014), since 2011, beside the remarkable self-help initiatives adopted by the communities of ‘informal’ settlements, (Stadnicki 2015)- Some of which had already started before 2011, and represent a long history of indirectly connected efforts that are concerned with exploring alternative modes of producing urban space (Ibrahim 2014)- many urban initiatives emerged post-2011; some articulate their views, independent from the state led media. Others reflect the views of local residents or open dialogues on several urban issues- either online or in a local hub. Further groups sought to give voices to subaltern groups based on action-oriented initiatives and promote a counter-approach to urban development than the dominating top-down one, by exploring possibilities for bottom-up urban interventions.

Scholars soon realized that the revolution was, spatially, not limited to Tahrir square and thus attempted to go beyond its spatial boundaries and overcome the conceptual reduction of the revolution to Tahrir square (Elhady and Nagati 2014); which was exacerbated by the international attention on Tahrir square, during the “Arab Spring”¹, contributing to readings that considered “[...] *Tahrir Square one of the most important public spaces in Egypt*” (Dana 2013, p.1). Meanwhile, debates were caught by concerns on cultural

¹ A description that was constructed by western and global media (Stadnicki, Vignal and Barthel 2014), yet met with skepticism, given its generalizing tendencies.

gentrification and neoliberal agendas that attempts to transform Downtown Cairo into a high-end city center (El Shimi, R. 2013; Abaza, M. 2011; Shawky, M. 2010).

The increasing financial crises and growing dissent from neoliberal urbanism as well as its implications that is manifested in the rise of the global civil society on the powerful elites, where social movements and uprisings in public squares are becoming a recurrent global phenomena (Harvey 2008). This makes it necessary to make sense of such dynamics within the broader context of the global urban activism trend. Nonetheless, it is equally important to understand them, both, within their local contexts and, methodologically, on the premises of a process-based analysis. Thus, attempts to link the 2011 revolution in Cairo to the “Arab spring” and more generally to global social movements, tends to frame it within the ‘neoliberal powers verses the people’ narrative. Such dualism might frustrate opportunities that reveal context-related dynamics of power. In addition while some accounts tend to read these actions as a form of direct resistance to the state, the players involved in these processes do not necessarily consider themselves as part of any insurgent forms of urbanism, therefore, while their activities exhibit challenging aspects to the dominating mode of urban production, it is important to carefully examine the attributes of this form of activism- considering Bayat’s concept of “*nonmovement*”² (2010) - when studying the emerging urban initiatives.

The last decade has witnessed an insightful discussion about public space and *public sphere*, where critical urban studies were able to overcome simple dualisms, and define nuanced concepts and resourceful tools for analysis. Yet, dichotomies and conceptual limitations, found their way in some of the readings on the implications of the revolution of 2011 in Egypt, regarding discussions on the transformation of public space. The challenge found in those accounts could be articulated in three points. **First**, the dichotomy between the people versus the state could reduce our understanding of the situation. **Second**, while these readings address highly important issues yet, the conceptual association between *public, private, urban space* and *power* needs to be more

² *Nonmovement* is defined as “[...] collective actions of noncollective actor” (Bayat 2010, p.14). It entails the ability of ordinary citizen to “[...] understand the constraints yet recognize and discover opportunities, and take advantage of the spaces that are available to enhance their life- chances [and] circumvent constraints, utilizing what is available and discovering new spaces within which to make oneself heard, seen, felt, and realized” (Bayat 2010, p.26).

flexible. **Third**, bracketing all the initiatives under the banner of ‘new culture trend’ humbles the opportunity to deeply explore the interplays and difference between them.

1.2 Theoretical focus and Objectives

Against this background, the research seeks to illustrate how conventional conceptualization of public space limits our understanding of processes by which public space is produced in Downtown Cairo. An in-depth reading of the situation reveals a more complicated power dynamics that requires a flexible understanding of the relationship between *publicness* and urban space. *Publicness* in this research is defined as “*throwntogetherness*’ which is the multiplicity of difference (Massey 2005). It is the “*juxtaposition of global diversity and difference in contemporary urban life*” (Amin 2008, p.10). It could also be seen as a civic culture of tolerating difference. Accordingly, this research focuses on the relationship between *publics*, their counter-practices and the context of their action, which will be referred to in this research as, “[...] *the urban dimensions of public-making*” (Iveson 2007, p.12). This understanding renders *Publicness* as a complex multi-dimensional construct.

The scope of this work is twofold. First, it comprises an explorative investigation conducted on four different initiatives in Downtown, in order to understand the relationship between the urban contexts, the type of counter-public action undertaken by active groups, and the motive of the action. This study illustrate the transforming experiences of certain groups and the ways they used the city, or urban space, to crystalize as a public and further circulate their concerns among various publics. Doing so, it frames post-2011-dependent-factors as well as context-related logic (e.g. informality) as key forces for the contemporary production of *publicness* in Downtown Cairo. Second, it tries to create a dialogue with a newly emerging paradigm shift, marked by attempts to introduce an alternative conceptualization of public space by capturing the flexible yet complex relationships between the categories “urban space” and “*publicness*”, denoted as *spatial publicness* (Shan 2017), *practices of publicness* (Quian 2014), *urban forms of public address* (Iveson 2007) or *variegated space-times of aggregation* (Amin 2008). The philosophical underpinnings of these conceptualizations resonate with both Lefebvre’s theory of space- widely used in critical urban studies- and relational theories of complexity and system interdependence, namely Latour’s ANT (Actor Network Theory) and *Urban assemblages* - currently gaining an increasing interest in urban studies.

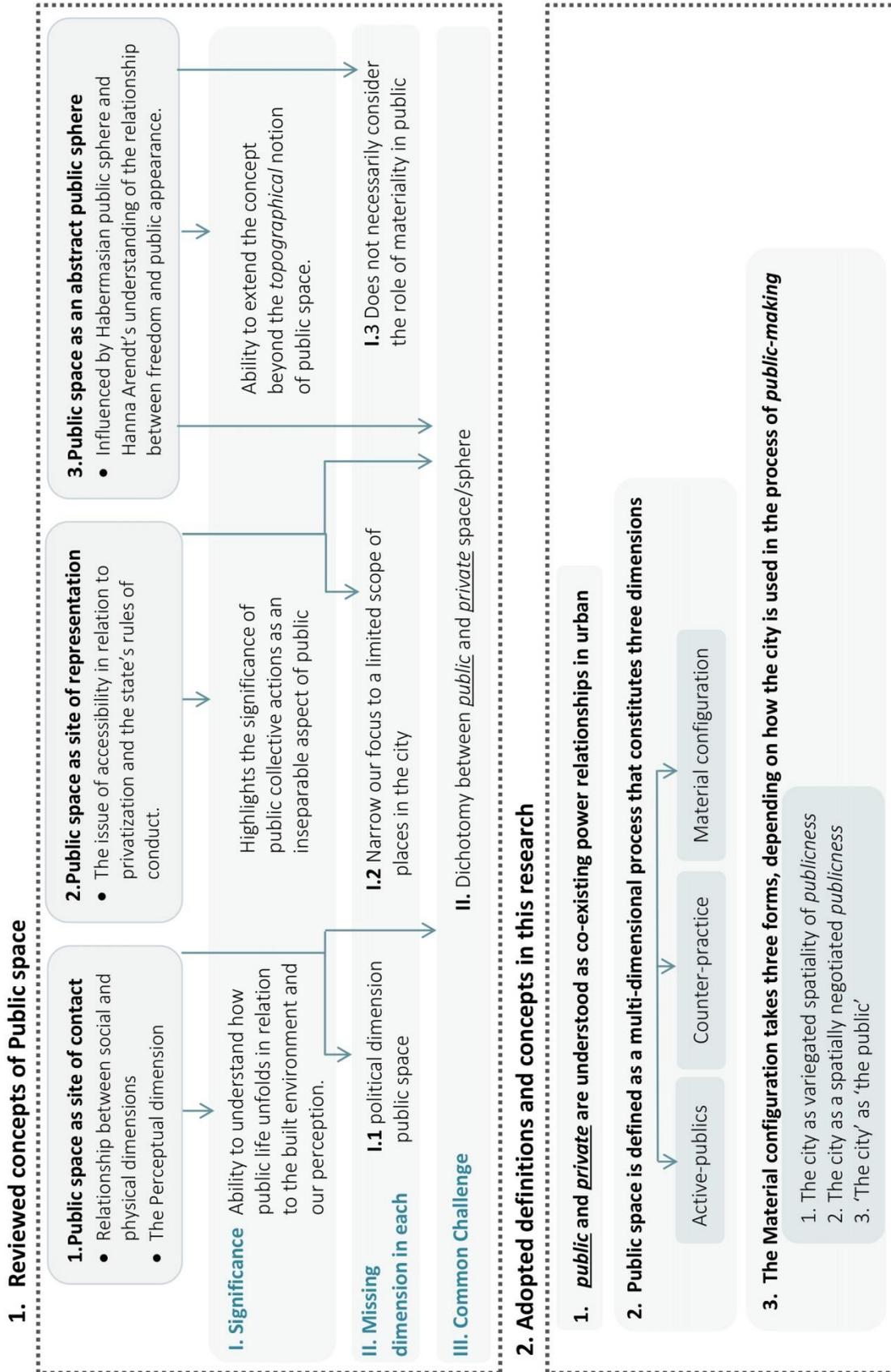


Diagram 1: Structure of the theoretical arguments discussed and the main concepts and definitions adopted in the research
Source: by Author

1.3 Hypotheses and research questions

The questions of this research are premised on the preposition that since the Egyptian revolution in 2011, newly emerging spatial practices, led by various groups, is driven by three entangled forces. These are partially influenced by already established modes of practice existing in Cairo long before 2011 and strengthened by the ephemeral experience of the revolution. Preliminary literature review and early observations both in the first field visits and explorations of the existing debates in popular media led to the development of these three propositions.

- *The ephemeral experience of Tahrir square awakened a sense of solidarity and motivation among young groups in order to induce change.*
- *The activities practiced during the revolution revealed certain affordances or potentials of urban space that opened a new field of experimentation and temporal transformations*
- *Existing context-specific aspects in Downtown Cairo enabled the emergence of alternative practices during and after the 2011-revolution.*

It is important to note that since this research is an exploratory qualitative case study research, the propositions above serves rather as overarching guidelines for the investigation. Accordingly, the aim of this research is to explore how young-middle class led initiatives in Downtown Cairo - considered as process-based interventions (Frederix 2015) - make use of the potential attributes of urban space and its materiality in different ways for the production of *publicness*- a process referred to here in this research as *public-making* (the term is borrowed from Iveson 2007). Thus, providing an in-depth understanding of how power of space is differently negotiated by various *publics*.

Doing so the research aims to answer the following questions:

- 1. How did the production of *publicness* change in Downtown Cairo in the aftermath of the revolution 2011?**
- 2. In which way was Downtown Cairo's urban space negotiated for public-making by various middle-class groups?**

1.4 Methodological approach

In order to understand the role of the revolution as a catalyst and the urban transformations that occurred since 2011, the research will conduct in-depth qualitative analyses to four initiatives, selected as case studies in Downtown Cairo. The activities of these urban initiatives vary - from urban interventions, media and newspaper to art and Cinema. Further details about the case studies and the selection process will be presented in chapter 5.

The objective of the empirical work is

- To outline the socio-spatial changes after 2011 on various levels- in terms of the physical space, the use or re-appropriation and the perception towards public-making.
- To provide an in-depth understanding of the process, by tracing the events and projects achieved and their implications, in addition to the mode of practice employed in each project.

The methodological approach of the research is **qualitative case study research** that employs a **multiple-case design**. Multiple-cases refer to case study research in which several cases- in this research **four case studies**- are selected in order to develop a rich and in-depth understanding of the phenomena (Denscombe M 2007; Hancock, D. R. & Algozzine, R. 2006). Each case has been analyzed separately before cross-case conclusions have been drawn (Ridder, H. 2017; Baxter, P. and Jack, S 2008). In addition, the research relies on explorative methods as an overarching approach to conduct the research, since it deals with unexplored situations of a newly emerging phenomenon (Harrison, H. *et al* 2017)- urban transformations in Downtown post-2011.

Choosing this methodological approach serves two purposes, first, it is a comprehensive approach that supports investigating and understanding complex issues in real world settings (Ridder, H. 2017). Second, while this approach helps develop a lens sensitive towards the uniqueness of each case, it helps capture common patterns across the four case studies.

Qualitative Case study research supports studies that aims to answer “how” and “why” questions and seeks to cover contextual conditions because they are relevant to the phenomenon under study (Baxter, P. and Jack, S 2008; Hancock, D. R. & Algozzine, R. 2006). In addition, case study research is a context-based approach, meaning it can be flexibly tailored specifically for considering aspects relevant to the case, yet easily missed. Since this research is concerned with understanding a *process* not only the *product*, the case study itself serves as the unit of analysis, which is called intrinsic case studies (Baxter, P. and Jack, S. 2008).

There are generally two philosophical realms in case study research; the quantitative/ positivist realm and the qualitative/ interpretivist realm (Harrison, H. *et al* 2017). This research follows the philosophical underpinnings of the latter. Nonetheless, ANT (Actor-Network-theory) is blended as a methodological approach in order to bridge the methodological gap and strengthen the quality of case study research. It is important to mention that the ANT is not adopted in this research as a theoretical framework, but rather serve analytical goals and thus its logic (elaborated below) is adopted in the methodological approach. While both (the case study approach and the ANT) understand *the social* as a ‘constructed reality’, yet there are two aspects that differentiate the philosophical perspectives of these methodological approaches. The constructivist approach (Case Study approach) considers *meaning-making* (social constructions) as the product of social agents in the form of social interaction between people (Ridder, H. 2017). In that sense they are criticized of overseeing the significant role of *materiality* in social processes. In ANT such limitation is compensated by focusing equally on all elements (human and non-human) that constitutes the make-up of reality (Latour 2005a). Moreover, these elements are connected in various sets of uncertain and unfixed patterns (Law, J. 2004). ANT focuses on the material arrangement of the environment they are studying. It observes the spatial flow of this materiality (e.g. people, instruments, tools...etc.)- In an urban setting this could be urban furniture, schedules of activities, and different types of uses...etc. for example. Looked at as a *system of material production*, the major product is identified. Law defines what is produced as “[...] *statements that carry authority, that tell about the outside world*” (Law, J. 2004 p.27).

1.4.1 Relationship between the methodological approach and the theoretical aim of this research

In order to trace the *process* through which a system of material production -that includes various material resources - turned into a *product*, several consecutive steps of tracing the materiality involved in the process are undertaken. It mainly aims to explore the particular configurations which transform material elements into text, information, knowledge...etc. One of the methodological gaps in social sciences that ANT attempts to overcome by such technique is when the focus is directed on the final *product* rather than the *process* that produced it, which tends to fall in the background and fade. Doing so, the materiality of the process tends to be ignored. For Law, "*this is why constructivism is often mistakenly thought to be about a purely human activity*" (Law, J. 2004, p.20). The methodological stance of Latour's ANT and Law's *method assemblage* (discussed further in Chapter 5) provide an approach to urban research that is aligned with the essence of Lefebvre's theory of space, and at the same time is relevant to the contemporary urban context. The resonance between them pertains to the relationship between the production process and the product it produced;

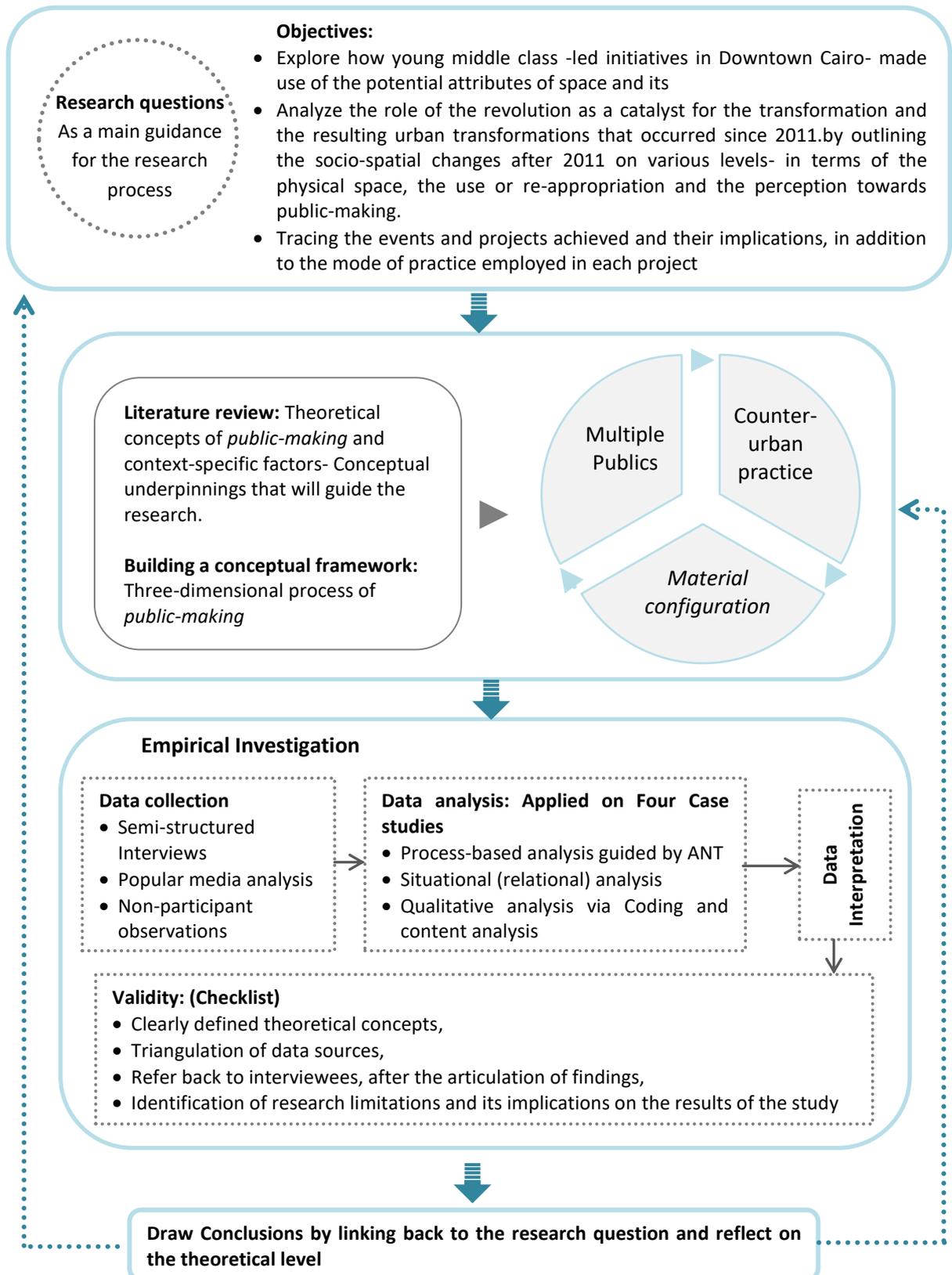
"Though a product to be used, to be consumed, it is also a means of production; networks of exchange and flows of raw materials and energy fashion space and are determined by it. Thus this means of production, produced as such, cannot be separated either from the productive forces, including technology and knowledge, or from the social division of labour which shapes it, or from the state and the superstructures of society" (Lefebvre 1991 [1974], p.85).

Second, the interpretivist position of qualitative case study approach tends to address and understand the world as though there is one single reality. While it emphasizes there is plurality of the views of reality (Baxter, P. and Jack, S 2008), yet it holds the stance that there is a definite "*out-therness*" (Law, J. 2004) meant to be scientifically understood through social inquiry. Meanwhile, ANT suggests an alternative way of thinking about "*out-therness*" the reality of the world (Law, J. 2004). Rather than one reality seen from different views, it acknowledges the existence of multiple and different worlds, in a relational sense -" [...] *there [is] no single answer, no single grand narrative. For the*

world is, the worlds we live in are, messier than that. There are many possible narratives” (Law, J. 2000, p.2). Here it is important to register that ANT does not hold a relativist position (Latour, B. 2005a), its stance is that reality -“*out-there-ness*”- is the outcome of the process not its cause (Law, J. 2004). The difference this makes in our understanding is that considering reality as a *cause* suggests that the mere existence of the materiality results in its production. Articulating reality as an *outcome* of the process, on the other hand, renders it intrinsically linked to a particular set of arrangements that produced that certain reality. Thus, the fact or reality produced predicates on the form of relations that bounds the material elements together. In that sense, different sets of arrangements or forms of relationships imply the production of different possible realities. Accordingly, it calls for approaching the object of study as open ended and constantly changing (Latour, B. 2005a).

In this regard combining both methodological approaches supports the adoption of an interdisciplinary approach to urban studies- borrowing from social sciences and conducting ethnographic methods- but at the same time maintaining a balance between focusing on social interactions and the role of physical artifacts (built-environment) in this process. The research process continuously went back and forth between literature review, referring to theoretical arguments and conceptual perspectives and developing ways to select the cases, collect and analyze the data and draw conclusions. The conceptual framework guided the empirical work. In addition literature review on the urban history of Downtown Cairo offered an insightful understanding of the context in which the initiatives emerged. Guided by the research questions and objectives, both the type of data needed and its collection method could be identified. The research design (See Diagram 2 below) shows that while the research process might begin with a linear structured model for guaranteeing an efficient management and pre-identified tasks within a certain timeline, nonetheless, in the *interactive model* (Maxwell, J. A. 2005), most of the research phases are revisited for reflection and alteration. The theoretical framework is not only used as guidance for conceptual analysis, rather, parallel to literature review and exploration of previous research and findings, the research questions are always evolving through this process and simultaneously the objectives identified for understanding the phenomenon under study. Thus, this symbiotic relationship between the articulation of the objectives and the data analysis, helped in narrowing down the, often, overwhelming data that were collected from the empirical field work.

Diagram 2: **Research Design**



Source: by Author. Research design model based on Maxwell, J. A. (2005)

1.5 Significance of the research

This study aims to contribute to research on urban activism with an empirical investigation on the current spatial productions of *publicness* in Cairo. Thus, providing an in-depth understanding of different modes of public-making based on various power negotiations within the context of Downtown Cairo. This could enhance potentials for collective action in the face of a government that lacks capacity and will to provide public services. On the theoretical level, this dissertation aims to contribute to the academic literature on urban studies by offering new insights on how people use and combine a variety of different urban sites for different public activities, which in turn open new ways to understand and raise new questions about the relationship between the urban space and the making of publics.

1.6 Limitation of the study

Due to the sensitive situation in Downtown Cairo particularly in the years after the 2011, conducting the field studies was coupled with various challenges. Various adjustments had to be undertaken after the first field visit. For example photography was a challenge since it was banned by a new law after 2011, particularly in Downtown Cairo. Thus site observations and registrations of information and descriptions in an audio recorder prove to be a better method. This was also due to some political instability that occurred during the last week of the fieldtrip, in addition to the situation after the revolution in 2011, were users of public space and shop-owners are skeptical to talk to strangers. Interviewing as a Ph.D. student from a foreign university is a challenge in the current situation and puts the researcher in the risk of being question by local authorities, unless I am a part of an official or local institution or an entity in Cairo involved in an academic research in the area. This form of state control was exercised on academic research and gained the attention of popular media.

Despite the overwhelming data on the urban history of Cairo, the research was focused on a new phenomenon that looks at uncharted process. For that matter, while the research provides an in-depth reading of the phenomenon, yet, it is unable to fully anticipate or foresee the further developments of the situation in Downtown Cairo and the impact of the newly emerging practices on the area. Since the subject matter of the study is a

process- a moving target- and a doctoral research by definition is bounded by time constraints and amount of data to be compiled in the body of the dissertation. In addition, the study is limited to readings relevant to a temporal phase. Moreover, as this qualitative research is context-specific, the findings are limited to a certain extent, in terms of the degree to which it can be replicated or re-adapted in other contexts.

1.7 Research structure

This dissertation is divided into 8 chapters. **Chapter 1** is an **introduction** of the dissertation. It presented the problem statement of this research, the theoretical aim, the research hypotheses and questions including the main objectives of the research and the methodological approach adopted in order to answer the research questions. **Chapter 2 reviews the main literature** on public space and its definitions. Three main views of public space are presented, within each view, the main definitions and concepts of public space are discussed including the shortcoming that other scholars hold on each view. Issues such as privatization of public space, state's control over public space, the dilemma of accessibility and the problematic of constructing 'narratives of loss', are some of the discussions of this chapter. The theoretical argument constructed provides an explanation on why there is a need for alternative conceptualization of public space. The chapter ends by addressing the issue of dividing the concepts of *public* and *private space or spheres and* concludes by adopting the theoretical understanding of *public* and *private* as "coexisting [power-] relationships in space" (Killian 1998, p.124)

Chapter 3 introduces **the conceptual framework** used in this research. It starts by referring to the conceptual relation between *publicness* and the city (Iveson 2007) as an attempt to follow an alternative line of thinking that approaches 'the urban' and urban phenomena on the premises of relational perspectives (Amin, A. 2008; Latour, B. 2005a); understanding it rather as multi-dimensional process, always in the state of becoming and thus opening up the platform of urban studies to new questions and discoveries. The second part of the chapter focuses on the relationship between the role of the built environment and the production process of *publicness* (or *public-making*) and culminates introducing the conceptual framework - laid out by Iveson 2007- on "*the urban*

dimension of public-making “as three forms of urban activism. These three forms of relationships are then used as a theoretical lens for the analyses of the case studies.

Chapter 4 provides a chronological brief review on **the urban history of Downtown Cairo**. It looks at the relationship between the changing dynamics of power relations and its implications on the spatial production in Downtown Cairo. It will conclude that even after Downtown has gradually lost its political and economic role on the level of the state, towards the end of the twentieth century, the city center managed to provide the inhabitants with a unique type of urban space, whereby it became the “*neo-bohemia*” (Naaman 2011); “a *heterotopic place*” (Ryzova 2013). Thus, laying the foundations for the spatial practices that emerged during the revolution in 2011 and enabling the production of various spatialities of *publicness* post- 2011.

Chapter 5 introduced the **Empirical work** of the study. It elaborates the overall research process, including the selection of the case studies, the preparation for the field studies and the data collection methods used, including a brief explanation of the procedures followed in order to conduct each method. The chapter ends by introducing the data analysis methods applied on the raw data and the objectives of each analytical tool in relation to the research objectives. **Chapter 6** presents the **findings of the four case studies**. This chapter outlines a detailed registration of the four case studies and their respective findings. It takes post- 2011 as a turning point in order to trace the changes that occurred in Downtown Cairo pertaining to the *public-making*, particularly, in relation to the four cases studies. **Chapter 7** presents the **discussion of the findings**. This is achieved by synthesizing relationships and patterns across the four cases and discussing their implications on understanding the phenomenon, in addition to interpreting the data in relation to the theoretical concepts. **Chapter 8** concludes the work of this dissertation by linking the theoretical argument with the empirical work and relates the main findings to the research questions. It also highlights the contributions of this research and suggests several points of departure for further research.

CHAPTER 02

2. REVIEW ON THE PREVAILING PERSPECTIVES OF PUBLIC SPACE

Definitions of public space vary within each discipline. In urban studies, single-discipline definitions might cause a challenge in the operationalization of comprehensive theories of urban space and the development of methodological frameworks for practical application. Seeking to understand the various phenomena of cities, and simultaneously preserving a holistic understanding of urban space has led to the adoption of the “*interdisciplinary approaches*” towards practically studying cities (Petrişor, A., 2012). Therefore, in this chapter, three strands of literature on public space will be reviewed. Each line of literature focuses on one aspect of public space that is considered highly important and relevant to this research. Parallel to this review the chapter will also point out some shortcomings that need to be taken in consideration, in order to adopt a comprehensive conceptual framework. The three approaches are:

- 1. Public space and the built environment**
- 2. The politics public space**
- 3. Public space as an abstract political *public sphere***

2.1 Public space and the built environment

Under the aegis of this perspective, public space is seen as a specific site in the city, where the urban form of the public space and its function as an element in the city is of major importance and is considered to have a great influence on the production of public life. This perspective focuses on how design affects social activities and behavioral patterns (Miller, K. F. 2007; Killian 1998). Among the prominent scholars of this perspective are Jan Jacobs 1961, Kevin Lynch 1960 and William H. Whyte 1980 (Neal 2010). This definition of public space supports the notion of urban design as a process (Madanipour 1996) rather than a visually aesthetic tradition. This perspective tried to overcome limitations of public space to its aesthetic or functional value, by introducing new ways of understanding and studying the dynamics of public spaces- how public life unfolds in those spaces and how people perceive different places. There are two standpoints within this overarching perspective. The first focuses on the relationship between the social and the physical dimensions of public space (Neal 2010). The second focuses on the people's perception of the environment - the perceptual dimensions (Carmona and Tiesdell 2007).

2.1.1 Relationship between the social and the physical dimensions

The sociologist William Whyte (1980) argued that in order to create good public spaces we need to first understand/study how public life unfolds. Accordingly he developed methods on how to study public life. Many authors were influenced by his views and adopted his "*Food attracts people who attract more people*" – approach (Whyte 1980; Project for Public Spaces 2009). Whyte introduced new observational methods in studying public spaces and the public life within them. Among those influenced by Whyte, the architect Jan Gehl who studied the social behavior of the people in public space (Gehl, J. and Svarre, B. 2013).

Gehl presented detailed observations that could help us better understand how public life unfolds in public spaces and how can we study them. He created a "*key word list*" that could be used to evaluate the design of public spaces in relation to the ways people use it and introduced field-research methods on how to study the relationship between the

physical conditions and the use patterns in public space. He identified two types of activities (*necessary and optional activities*) and argued that *optional activities* indicate the good quality of the public life in cities (2010). Gehl argues that good design of public space creates a better public life given the strong relationship between *invitation* and patterns of use (2010). For example, inviting pedestrians and cycling, consequently, brings more people to the streets. Sidewalks should be led unbroken through entrances, thus increasing the porosity of the urban fabric, referring to the ‘*welcomeness*’ of streets and plazas to walk through. This could be achieved by building “*small units and many doors*”, which are part of his concept of the “*human scale*” (Gehl 2010, p.129), a point that was strongly emphasized by Jan Jacobs as well, as one of the key “*generators of diversity*” (Jacobs 1961, p.150), along with other social qualities such as safety, vitality and density and the role they play in creating *successful* neighbourhoods. Further, Jacobs discussed the public life of a neighbourhood park in relationship to the “*functional physical diversity*” (Jacobs 1961, p.97) of uses from the buildings surrounding this park. She emphasized on the importance of the park’s location within the neighborhood. Jacobs argues that, given the fact that people have different schedules, it is the uses of the buildings surrounding it that produce a better public life in the park and warns against “*functional monotony*” (Jacobs 1961, p.99), because it results in non-occupied surrounded buildings for long hours in the day which in turn repels public life (Jacobs 1961).

Since public space is considered as the domain of social interactions and face to face everyday encounters between strangers in the city, many literature emphasize on how public space is responsible for the public health of a given society and the role public space plays within a neighbourhood to encourage *physical activities* among the residents (Carr *et al* 2007 [1992]), referred to as “*Third Places*” (Oldenburg 2007 [1989]). Carr *et al* 1992, discussed aspects such as comfort, relaxation, passive and active engagement, and discovery as the basic needs to be fulfilled in public spaces and the reasons why people use public spaces. Those element are directly linked to the way they define public space as “[...] *an escape from the urban overloads*” (Carmona and Tiesdell 2007, p. 237) and as “[...] *places functioning as oases*” (Carmona and Tiesdell 2007, p. 238). There are various methods introduced by the researchers within the discipline of urban design

on how to approach and physically design public spaces. A significant body of literature provides examples in design guidelines for public space (Miller, K. F. 2007). This view invites us to focus on “[...] *six broadly social–spatial dimensions of design (morphological, perceptual, social, visual, functional and temporal)*” (Neal 2010, p.61)

The implication that are drawn from these theoretical constructs on public space, lies in their concern on the role urban design plays in fostering urban public space and in turn public life, where certain designs encourage the use, while others deliver a feeling of alienation and in turn relinquish public life. Since the 1960s and as a response to the planning and design trends that resulted in the social alienation and segregation of cities, a thread of literature, under this perspective, discussed the concept of *Contact* as one of the main values of public space. Killian indicates, many authors, such as Jan Jacobs, Richard Sennett and Jan Gehl emphasize on the value of encountering strangers in the city (1998). For them, the successful public spaces are those that encourage the type of contact, which enhance public life. It invites individuals to meet and interact in public without being forced to form the kind of intimate relationships such as those of families and friends (Killian1998). Attention to the provision of public space that encourages the *flâneur*³ to experience the city became the new formula of a good public space (Banerjee 2001). Jacobs’s notion of encountering strangers, have been used as a design guideline. The type of contact Jacobs described is premised on a mutual trust between the key players of the public life in a given urban space (e.g. residents, regular visitors and shop owners of a sidewalk). This type of contact simultaneously, creates *trust* among people and preserves their *privacy*. It maintains a certain balance that does not let this *trust* turn into an invasion of privacy. For Jacobs, this type of service could not be institutionalized and needs to remain informal (Jacobs J. 1961).

³ The French concept of the *flâneur*, means the casual wanderer, stroller and observer of street-life in the modern city, it was first explored, in the writings of Baudelaire. Walter Benjamin returned to the concept of the *flâneur* in his work, *The Arcades Project*. This study used Baudelaire’s *flâneur* concept to explore the impact of modern city life upon the human psyche (see: *The Arcades Project 1982*, by Walter Benjamin). Focus on the concept could also be found in Banerjee’s arguments about how literature on the urbanism of modernity have illustrated that the success of *third places* or *invented place*- both terms used to describe the settings of places that encourages the consumer culture – shifted the focus from the form to the function, since it is the stimulates the occurrence of activities, events and celebrations, that are described as *flânerie* (See: *The future of public space: beyond invented streets and reinvented places* 2001, by Tridib Banerjee).

2.1.2 The Perceptual dimension

The perceptual dimension follows the school of Kevin Lynch, by looking at several *visual qualities* (such as Legibility, imageability...etc.) that plays a significant role in how the image of the city is formed in one's perception. A Variety of elements in the city- *paths* (e.g. streets, walkways, passageways...etc.); *edges* (e.g. the point at which two regions are joined together); *districts- nodes* (e.g. places of a break, or simply concentrations of some uses, street corner hangout, or an enclosed space); *landmarks* (e.g. some are primary local such as, storefronts) are combined together producing different visual qualities that in turn construct our mental maps of the city and help us make sense of the built environment (Lynch 1960).

This (*Perceptual*) dimension was further extended by another body of literature on “space and place” distinctions. Relph for example, introduces the notion of Place and its relation to space. For Relph space and place are inseparable concepts “[...] *dialectically structured in human environmental experience*” (Seamon and Sowers 2008, p.44). Relph argues that our understanding of space is contingent to his lived experience in a specific place and the meanings derived from the context of that place. In other words, physical settings, activities and meanings, are intertwined in a “[...] *dialectical link*” forming what he calls “[...] *the identity of place*” (Relph 1976, p.104).

In trying to explain this relationship, Relph further introduced two significant concepts about place, namely, *sense of place* and *placelessness*. Relph defines the “*sense of place*”, as “*the character of place*”, as “*a direct and genuine experience of the entire complex of the identity of Places*” (Relph 1976, p.64). Relph considers it an essential element that links the three components of the *identity of place*. “*Placelessness*” on the contrary is considered as the elimination of the uniqueness of places. It is the result of the urbanization trends in our modern era such as homogenization and standardization, where an authentic sense of place is becoming increasingly lost (Carmona and Tiesdell, 2007).

In relation to the topic of this research, these concepts help to understand the perceptual dimension of public space, where it goes beyond understanding the relationship between the social activities of the people in public spaces and the physical

settings of public space. It shifts our understanding of public space, as a concept, to considering it as public place with unique identity that is contingent to the lived human experience in that place. Drawing on Lynch's view, that identity of places provides unique features to them, Relph argues that it is not only our mere ability to differentiate places that is significant to our understanding of place identities, rather, it is how different people experience the same places in different ways, according to their relationship to that place. Understanding why places bear significant meanings to some people and others not in a phenomenological perspective is one of his main contributions to the field of urban design (Seamon and Sowers 2008). *Insideness* and *outsideness* are another account of the dialectical opposites that Relph uses to conceptualize the place-experience, where *insideness* refers to a profound feeling that a person has inside a place and *outsidness* refers to the feeling of alienation a person has inside a place (Relph 1976). Nonetheless, the *theory of place* alone is not sufficient in the analyses of the production process of public space.

2.1.3 Challenges of this perspective

Even though the socio-spatial approach succeeds in bringing social and physical aspects of space in one framework, and combines planning, urban design and architectural design theories with social and anthropological concepts and in trying to understand how public life unfolds in urban spaces, nevertheless, it has been criticized for its limitations regarding political aspects of public space. As Killian elaborates, this perspective tends “[...] to focus on public life that is limited and constrained by a bourgeois sensibility” (1998, p.119).

2.1.3.1 The abstract thinking of space in a figurative sense

In this line of literature, public space tends to be depicted in a figurative sense (such as *stage*, *theatre* or *outdoor room*). Therefore, it is important to be careful while using such metaphors, in order to avoid the trap of rendering the users as passive *audience*. Doing so might lead to overseeing the role of the user in the process of place-making. As a result it is argued that these frameworks might need to be expanded in a way that enables it to

answer questions regarding concerns about whether public life is pre-determined by the designer and other powerful decision-makers (Lehtovuori 2005).

2.1.3.2 *The conflict between safety and exclusion*

A second challenge pertains to how several ideas, such as Jacobs's idea of "*eyes on the street*", were depoliticized and re-constructed in a different way than she intended, as though the "ideal" public space meant a place free from undesired people (Killian 1998). For example, various qualities of public space such as *safety* have been used to exclude other 'undesired' users⁴ that are seen as threat to the 'normal' users of public space (*ibid*). Jacobs emphasized on the significance of intensifying the use by different social groups in the street of a given district (Jacobs 1961). Most importantly, Jacobs's concept of *safety* included the co-existence of conditions that did not intend to provide safety to certain groups at the expenses of excluding others. Attempting to eliminate contradictions that are inherent in urban space is not a solution for establishing safe urban spaces in the city (Jacobs 1961).

Never the less, as argued by Iveson, the very measures that are taken to provide security and safety and enhance the quality of life in public space, results in producing exclusionary 'public' spaces, where users such as: homeless people, graffiti activists, teenage skateboarders and protestors are considered as a threat to public space users. For city mayors and security executive bodies, "[...] *exclusion of a troublesome minority will make public space more accessible to the well-behaved majority*" (2007, p.5). Iveson opposes these views and criticize them for being "[...] *by no means the sole preserver of the political right*" (Iveson 2007, p.5).

Similar agendas have been used by investors and privatized public space managers who claim that their success stems from their provision of public space that protects its users from undesired groups. Therefore, some of the studies under this perspective are considered to lack more attention to the political challenges that form a great part of the complexity of public spaces (Killian 1998). This in turn leads to either, over simplifying

⁴ Example: Oscar Newman 1972 "*Defensible Space: Crime Prevention through Urban Design*".

the concept of public space to mere social encounters in the city or using urban design concepts for other private interest/agendas. In both cases urban space is rendered as free from conflicts and contradictions.

2.2 Public space and urban justice

Here, public space is seen from the standpoint of urban politics (Amin 2006; Killian 1998). Public space is perceived as the place where the dynamic process of people's interaction, their expression of attitudes, the exchange of ideas and claim of their rights take place (Goheen 1998). This perspective was initiated around the late 1980s (Killian 1998) and adopted by many scholar- to mention a few, Peter Marcuse 2014, Don Mitchell 1995; Edward Soja 1980; David Harvey 1973- who were influenced by Lefebvre's theory of space. In their view, the significance of public space does not only lie in encountering strangers or engendering tolerance for difference. The focus here is, rather, on the production process of public space. Scholars tried to abandon the notion of space as a container for social interactions by devoting their research to analyzing the contested relationships that are inherent in the making of space and its politics, as well as, social-spatial (in) justice in cities (Fainstein, S. 2014).

Mitchell argues that cities are shaped by the inevitable struggle between different people with their different agendas. Mitchell emphasize on the necessity of cities to become sites for "*cohabitation of differences*" (1995, p.18). For, in Mitchell's terms, the focus is rather on the struggles of the production of public space within a given society, rather than eliminating these contestation/struggles, by creating parallel enclaves of plural societies.

Influenced by Lefebvre, Mitchell establishes that, the *publicness* of public spaces is not inherent in its pre-designated code of use, for instance by the state. It is rather when "[...] *the cry and demand for the right to the city*⁵" are "*seen and heard*" (Mitchell, D. 1995, p.35), or are undertaken by a certain group in a given urban space that this *publicness* is produced (Mitchell, D. 1995). Thus, public space is defined as a site of contestation and

⁵ "*The Right to The City*" is a concept that defines the relationship between the city and urban society (Lefebvre (1996) [1968]). It was developed in the 1960s by Henri Lefebvre. For Lefebvre, this reinvented collective right, is of the whole urban society to *inhabit* the city (Lefebvre 1996 [1968]). Lefebvre's concept is an open concept and has been differently interpreted.

representation, where people claim their *right to the city* rather than mere contact in the city.

Generally, it is seen as a space of contestations and conflicts and it reveals the degree of democracy in a given society. Here it is important to reflect on the relevance of the concept of democracy in non-western countries. As Qian argues, even though democracy and freedom of expression are not commonly established concepts in non-western contexts, yet, it has been historically used as a space for protesting (Qian 2014). Therefore, access to public space for the free expression of political thoughts among various groups is regarded as vital aspect that determines the degree of ‘*publicness*’ of a given public space. As Madanipour puts it, public space is “[the] space that allows all people to have access to it and the activities within it, which is controlled by a public agency, and which is provided and managed in the public interest “ (Madanipour 1996, p.148). Nonetheless, Madanipour’s definition of the ideal public space bears a different reality, since the issue of *access* to public space is directly affected by the state’s rules of conduct and the privatization of public space.

2.2.1 The Dilemma of accessibility to public space

2.2.1.1 The state’s rules of conduct

It is argued that, public space in the contemporary city is no longer an inclusive space, since marginalized groups cannot claim their rights to public space and often find themselves shadowed by other powerful groups (Goheen 1998). As such ‘*visibility*’ of marginalized individuals and groups in public space is considered a vital aspect, for it entails their inclusion in the “*space of representation*” (Mitchell, D. 1995). Yet, access to public space-sites of representation- is usually controlled by codes of conduct defined as “appropriate use” of public space (Killian 1998). The notion of ‘appropriate use’ of public space is usually linked to the concept of *Modernity*. Even though there are no consensus in literature about the origins and the definitions of modernity⁶ and its consequences (Appadurai 1996; Giddens 1990) nonetheless, it is widely argued that the

⁶ see: Anthony Giddens in *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990); Arjun Appadurai in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996)

rules of conduct or ‘appropriate use’ of public space originated in the era of modernity. To briefly introduce this relationship, as Rappa (2002) establishes:

“The modernity of public space is premised on (1) tangible institutional structures that include established positions in personnel, rules, regulations, laws, and budgets; and (2) intangible structures of public space involving complex and abstract relationships between and among its participants. Markets and states modify, restrict or enhance public activities, and serve as resources for the tangible and intangible structures of public space.” (Rappa 2002, p.7)

Although Rappa is careful not to claim that public space in modern times merely reflects dominating economic, social and cultural aspects that are inherent in the modernity of public space, yet, he acknowledges that the power over the politics of public space, in terms of the determined form and function, and the dynamics of its change is contingent to the continuous change of those intangible aspects (power-relationships among various stakeholders).

In non-Western contexts, public space is often used to impose social control by the state. It is considered as a symbolic manifestation of the ideologies and values of the dominating public sphere⁷. As Qian states, *“From a top-down perspective, it has been widely observed that powerful groups in non-Western societies, much alike to their Western counterparts, work painstakingly to inscribe dominant values and political views into public space.”* (2014, p. 836). Looking at state-designated public spaces in Egypt, scholars argue that, the process of controlling public space by the state in Cairo, where it is physically segregated and fenced off in order to enforce social order, aims to modernize and “civilize” the crowd. The government justifies such actions by claiming that the people misconduct in public space and cause its deterioration (El Sheshtawy 2006; Abaza 2001). As such, the tension between the people’s right to access public

⁷ *Public sphere* is a concept developed by Jurgen Habermas, 1989, broadly defined as the space (not necessarily physical space) that is accessible to all citizens. Public sphere is the “*realm of freedom and permanence*”. It is where “*everything is revealed and visible to all*” (1989, p. 4). It is where political discourses take place and where the private individuals “*come together as public*” (1989, p. 27).

space and the state's desire to reflect a certain image of the city to attract private investment lies in enforcing certain rules of conduct.

2.2.1.2 Privatization of public space

In the cities of today, the question is no longer why some public places are more livable and filled with people than others or how to make public spaces more attractive in order to enhance public life as William H. Whyte, in 1960s, ought to find out, rather, “ [the] *patterns of design, management, and systems of ownership that reduce diversity*” (Low, S. 2006, p. 44) and liveliness in public space and prioritized access to “[...] *tourists and middleclass people*”, are the questions of today's concern. Low emphasizes that, while some projects are intentionally designed to exclude the undesired groups and control the uses of public space, as previously presented, in other projects those consequences are “[...] *a by-product of privatization, commercialization, historic preservation and poor planning and design*” (ibid).

From a different perspective Sennett, in his stance on the relinquishment of public culture, he finds the *public person* before the 19th century more skilled (or enjoys more *civility*) to perform his role as a public actor; which generated a meaningful relationship between the public self and the others, based on the balance between public and private lives. Sennett defines *civility*, as the power to create social bond among strangers. This bond is premised on a social distance, dictated by their co-existence in a given public site in the city (Sennett 1992). Nonetheless, after the 19th century, as a result of the modernization and ever more privatized life, this public culture and our *civility* was lost to private life. From active public figures, society turned into a passive spectacle, unable to counter the current dominating forces (Sennett 1992).

Nonetheless, it is important to point out that privatization of public space is not merely the result of a hegemonic capitalism. Consumerism is not only the outcome of a top-down force. It is to a great extent the result of bottom-up forces as well, denoted in the rise of new cultural values and meanings that determine a new lifestyle, where the cultural significance of these locally adopted spaces reside (Qian 2014). For example, privatized spaces, such as the up-market coffee shops in Cairo have become essential

spaces for the upper-middle-class Cairenes. “[This] *social group* [is] *able to negotiate [...] new relationship with the global economy in both cultural and economic terms*” (de Koning 2009, p.537). Hence, their consumption patterns and lifestyles have influenced the rise of new public spaces for consumption and leisure, as well as “[...] *shifting axes of centrality in the city at large*” (de Koning 2009 p.538).

Globalization is another concept that is closely related to such processes. In order to understand the relationship between the privatization of public space and economic globalization, it is important to briefly introduce the concept of the *Global city*. Nonetheless, this is not to say that privatization of urban spaces or the production of spaces of consumerism is equivalent to economic globalization of cities, where they become a global city or a world city. The global aspect in such process is when these trends globalize, in other words, when they are adopted by other cities around the globe in a relatively standardized manner as an attempt to become a global city (Adham 2004). According to Sassen the flow of information, capital, labour and goods, which she calls the “*cross-border*” economic process, have always been taking place under the control of the nation state. However, since the era of globalization, in 1980s, as a result of privatization, deregulation, the establishment of foreign firms and the integration into the global economy, the nature of these flows has dramatically changed. They became bounded by a global network in a new system that undermines or weakens the national system and instead strengthens the “*sub-national*” and *supra-national entities*” (Sassen 2005, p.27). These cities then become detached from their national states and form an independent entity integrated with the global network system. Thus, reducing the government’s power to regulate the international economic activities. Furthermore, the increasingly high profile of these professionals, their incomes and lifestyle leads to a clear spatial and social inequality in these cities. For these global economic activities are highly dependent on an entire structure of services and non-expert jobs in the city (which is one of the essential derives of migration and concentration of disadvantaged people) leading to spatial and economic polarization (Sassen 2005).

Although not all cities are global cities and it is crucial to take into consideration that the above global city model of Sassen may not fully apply to several cities in the global south (Chakravorty 2000), yet, this incomplete globalization process, particularly in cities

of the global south is characterized by adopting globalized urbanization trends, such as gated communities, urban mega projects, and luxurious housing projects in city centers, chains of standardized hotels and restaurants and shopping malls (Olds 1995; Friedmann, J. 2010). For example, in Vietnam, the *commodification* of urban development in terms of transferring land use rights from the state to private agencies result in the “*marketization of housing and land*” (Waibel 2006, p.43). This process led to the shift of power over urban space from the state to the transnational corporations and household enterprises and employed to fulfill their desire to be part of a globalizing community, manifested by “*prestigious new urban areas*” (Waibel 2006, p.46). Even national states started to be engaged in this process, branding their cities as a commodity, stimulating exaggerated projects to catch the attention of the world such as Dubai’s Burj Khalifa super-skyscraper that rises 825 m into the air (2010). “*In this frenzy of excess, the needs of ordinary people and the neighborhoods they inhabit have been forgotten*” (Friedmann 2010, p. 150).

The implications of these processes on public space lie in the relinquishment of public life due to the limited accessibility to urban public spaces, on one hand, and the rise of profit-oriented urban development trends, thus diminishing urban public spaces in the city, on the other. One of the greatest implications of these occurrences in relation to urban space in Cairo could be observed in the ways spatial expansions reflected the uneven distribution of wealth. The spread of countless numbers of gated communities and walled-off privately owned ‘public spaces’, particularly on the outskirts of the city, were “[...] *intimately linked to a fusion of consumerism, entertainment, popular culture, and tourism*” (Adham 2005), which is exclusively enjoyed by middle and upper classes. “[...] *these global flows have caused the boundaries between public and private spaces to enter a rapid and persistent state of flux*” (Adham 2005, p. 19). Yet it is important to note that the “[...] *flows of transnational popular culture are not so much cases of foreign imperialism [...] as they are processes managed by Cairene entrepreneurs*” (Peterson M.2011, p171).

Linking these debates to the central argument of this section, the issue of *accessibility* in relation to privatized public urban spaces boils down to the affordance of a limited segment of people to access such privatized places, a segment that belongs to

Sassen's high profile professionals and Waibel's globalized modern community (Waibel 2006), or to use de Koning term, "*Cairo's cosmopolitan group*" (de Koning 2009 p.538). However, considering another view on such claims- that one of the consequences of privatized public space or spaces of consumption are producing individualistic and materialistic societies- Amin argues, there is plenty of research proving that despite the resulting consumerist culture among different parts of society. Yet, there is a sense of *togetherness* that has been produced among people in these privatized places (Amin 2008). Therefore, the limited accessibility of privatized urban spaces should not represent the degree of *publicness* found in all urban sites in the city. This conceptualization of public space narrows the notion of *publicness* to specific physical places in the city (Hou 2012; Iveson 2007; Lehtovuori 2005; Killian 1998; Staeheli 1996).

2.2.2 Challenges of this perspective

Despite the issues found in both western and non-western contexts as a consequence of the control over state-designated public space and the privatization of public space, nonetheless, the conceptual association between the aforementioned issues and the concept of *publicness* could bear many challenges. For that matter it is crucial to develop a more flexible framework, in terms of the relationship between *publicness* and the city. Even though Madanipour attempts to bridge the gap between various disciplines in the way urban space is understood, nonetheless, he tends to use a ,spatially, confined conceptualization of public space (Lehtovuori 2005). Confining *publicness* to certain physical borders as though *publicness* terminates beyond these borders, reduces our conceptualization of urban space itself (Iveson 2007), in other words, defining *publicness* on the premises of the accessibility to the sites of representation in the city is becoming increasingly challenging in light of the wide spread of privatization, where more places are becoming exclusionary, especially, to those who try to take an active role and claim their rights as part of the public (Iveson 2007). In addition, the validity of such notion of public space in the contemporary city is put in question. As Amin argues, such a notion did bear a meaning in traditional roman and Greek cities, where a central public space took a key role in the cultural and political life of the cities. Today however, there are multiple sites in the city for a society to participate/share cultural and political

experiences (Amin 2008). This paradigm shift of the notion of public space is the central argument of the following section.

Under the tenants of the previously discussed view, public space has often been discussed through a ‘*narrative of loss*’ (Yang 2014; Iveson 2007; lehtovuori 2005), while in fact, as Iveson points out, ‘narratives of loss’ about public space have always been constructed differently according to the context of the narrative. Government bodies maintain *order* on the expenses of *freedom of expression* or Graffiti artists express their art on the expenses of property rights, the excluded and the excluders change in each narrative (Iveson 2007).

2.2.2.1 *Limiting publicness to a confined site in the city*

Publicly used spaces- in the context of the old city of Cairo- were not restricted to their open physical form, and their *publicness* as such does not apply to the visual openness assumed in some public spaces in the western context. Not only Muslim culture but old Chinese cities, as well, had a different typology of space and a public life than its counterpart-the European city. As Alsayyad and Bristol observed in their comparative study on public space focusing on three different cultures (European, Middle eastern⁸ and Chinese), public life in Chinese cities extended to the courtyards of the houses, where it was used for public activities beside the private household activities (Yang 2014; Alsayyad and Bristol 1992). *Alleyways* or narrow passageways were also significant for the public life of the neighbourhood community in old Chinese cities (Yang 2014), although political activities were not practiced by the public and only took place in open large public spaces in the form of political authoritarian representation due to the “*Chinese imperial system*“ at that time (Alsayyad and Bristol 1992, p.200).

A second feature of urban squares in Middle Eastern cities that makes it distinctive from its counterpart, the European city, is the representation of power relations by means of design of urban squares. In medieval European cities, the urban square of the church played a significant role in shaping urban space, it “[...] *almost always occupied a*

⁸ Even though there is a great difference between Arabic cities in the Middle east and the Arabic cities in North Africa, here Alsayaad and Bristol refer to both as Middle eastern cities

separate, autonomous urban square” (Alsayyad and Bristol 1992, p.203). Unlike the European city- the religious-political city of Rome or Athens as symbolized by Lefebvre- the Islamic city did not require an autonomous square to place the mosques as a representation of power.

Therefore, the logic of an urban square, where power is represented was not considered as a major aspect of the Muslim/Arabic city, it was rather the social life being practiced in any given urban space that played a significant role. As stated by Alsayyad and Bristol “[...] religion was more than an urban institution; it was a way of life that dominated all aspects of Muslim society” (1992, p.203). Moreover, recreation as an activity was an inseparable part of the Muslim culture, as a result there were no open squares for the sole purpose of recreation, and it was the *Sahn* of the mosque where cultural activities and discussions took place, in addition to the *Bazars*, where people gathered for several activities beside the commercial use. *Bazars* also served as a place for eating, drinking and festivals (Alsayyad and Bristol 1992).

“In Europe, it was the competition between economic, political and religious institutions that had the most profound impact on the form of open space. This competition produced competing, yet clearly identifiable open spaces. In the Middle East, urban space was shaped by a much looser power structure, resulting in less clearly defined open spaces” (Alsayyad and Bristol 1992, p.204). Neither in contemporary cities - both western and non-Western- could *publicness* be defined by fixed physical sites in the city designated as public. Rather it ought to be regarded as a flexible aspect that gains its meaning through the type of spatial practice performed by the society.

❖ ***Publicness in the contemporary city***

According to Iveson *publicness* is at once “*a context for action, a kind of action and a collective actor*” (Iveson 2007, p.8), thus, giving one dimension the supremacy over the other two results in a limited conceptualization of *publicness*. Considering *access* as the main aspect that makes a place *public* undermines the complexity of the process of producing *publicness* (Hou 2012; Iveson 2007; Lehtovuori 2005). Since designating a physical place for public use does not necessarily provide advantages for public action.

Thus, urban public space is not confined by certain physical characteristics. Amin elucidates, “ [...] every public space has its own rhythms of use and regulation, frequently changing on a daily or seasonal basis [...] There is no archetypal public space, only variegated space-times of aggregation” (2008, p. 9). Definitions that entail an assumption that some places in the city that are designated for public use are unquestionably “public”, are misleading, given the nature of current urban development trends, where cities are being economically and socially segregated and fragmented to foster capital accumulation and state control (Deutsche 1992).

2.3 Public space as an abstract political public sphere

This perspective is concerned with political participation through debates in public space (Neal 2010). Here, public space is seen as the realm of politics, the domain of public actions and debates about public affairs (Goodsell, C. T. 2003; Benhabib 1992). Within this perspective various views of public space could be identified, in terms of political theory or “*western political thought*” (*ibid*): according to Benhabib, Hannah Arendt’s *republican view*, the liberal tradition; “*legalistic*” model of public space, and the *democratic-socialist* view of Jürgen Habermas’s model of public space (Benhabib 1992, p.89). The most influential are Jürgen Habermas’s concept of *public sphere* and Hannah Arendt’s social and political concepts, particularly, the relationship between freedom and public appearance (Neal 2010; Mensch 2007). Most views in this perspective refer to these two central political thinkers, while their views lie within the realm of democratic theory, yet, their focus differs. Arendt is concerned with *political action* and Habermas is concerned with *public communication* (Goodsell, C. T. 2003). The concern of this section is rather on how the followers of this line of thoughts tend to share a common denominator in their approach to the idea of public space, namely, their understanding of the relationship between *publicness* and the materiality of the city (Iveson 2007).

Influenced by Habermas’s idea of public sphere, political theorists analyze public space in a broader sense. They focus on all aspects of the public domain (such as: media, public opinion... etc.) and their ability to construct an ideal *public sphere* that reflects a truly democratic society. Kellner suggests that Habermas’s concept of public sphere can be

defined as a space that mediates between two realms: the private everyday life in civil society, represented in family and work, and the realm of the state power and domination (Kellner 2000). Kellner explains that this “*bourgeois public sphere*” (ibid, p.3) is conceptualized as a medium for the production of discourse on common affairs and criticism of the repressive forms of social and public power (Kellner 2000). Habermas’ “public sphere” provides a medium of public action, where participation through debate and discourse, that are “*critical of the state*” (Fraser 1990, p.56), are undertaken by the citizens and in turn create public space (Goodsell, C. T. 2003; Fraser 1990). The definition of public space in that sense does not consider the implications of its materiality, since it considers public space as a metaphor to public sphere. For example, Deutsche defines public space as the space that symbolizes the relationship between *discourses* and *visions* (Deutsche 1992, p. 43-44). For her it is neither a recognized topography in the city, designated as public, nor is it a public institution. Deutsche’s public space is rather a discursive formation that does not have a defined materiality (Deutsche 1992).

The second view is that of Arendt’s concept, which considers public space as any location where a collective action takes place in any given time (Benhabib 1993). This public space is not defined according to its spatial settings, as Benhabib argues, “[...] *town hall or a city square where people do not ‘act in concert’ is not a public space in this Arendtian sense*” (Benhabib 1993, p. 102). In that sense, Arendt’s thoughts revolutionized our understanding of a crucial aspect in public space, namely being active, thus our mere appearance as “*economic producers, consumers and urban-city dwellers*” (Benhabib 1993, p. 101), have transformed public space of politics into a pseudo-space, where instead of *acting* we merely *behave* (ibid).

Although the dependent relationship between *publicness* and the *polis*, in terms of handling a civilized debate where the freedom of speech is staged in the *site of appearance*, nonetheless, Arendt highlighted, that *polis* is not defined as the “*city-state in its physical locations*” (Iveson 2007, p.10); *polis* is defined as the group of people taking a political action (for instance a political debate) regardless of their physical location. This action then, according becomes the time-space dimension of public space. Taking part in it (e.g. speech) involves *appearance* of the individual to the group, as well as

appearance of the group to the individual (Iveson 2007; Mensch 2007), thus public space is created. This means that any physical location can become a public space, when used as a *site of power* and collective action (Benhabib 1993).

This *procedural approach* defines public space as an abstract space which becomes a “*site of power*” through a political public debate at a given time (Iveson 2007, Benhabib 1993). Accordingly, public action may take place anywhere in the city. Interpreters of this view might argue that public space is not necessarily a physical space in the city, it could take place in other public venues; such as: media and communication, newspaper and printed media, radio, television and internet (Iveson 2007).

Arendt’s definition of *political right*, states that this right is not the individual’s right in the *site of appearance*, since, the only right of representation in this site is for *the public*. Although Arendt’s main argument here is about the right of individuals to access the *sites of appearance*, nonetheless, her argument led to the questions whether in that sense any group with no access to those representative sites, “*the sites of appearances*”, or the “*polis*” (influenced by the Greek’s definition of public), might not be considered as *public* (Mensch 2007; Killian 1998).

2.3.1 Challenges of this perspective

One of the main contributions this perspective adds is their ability to extend the concept beyond the *topographical* notion of public space -as a fixed physical site in the city. Rather, it increases the flexibility of the concept to encompass other modes of public space. It also highlights the significance of public collective actions as an inseparable aspect of making something public. The tangibility of public space in this perspective lies in the publicly *seen* activities (Mensch, J. 2007), yet, the materialistic configurations of the physical settings, where these activities take place, were not the focus of these thinkers. For that matter it is important to realize that the main concern of these thinkers was devoted to societal and democratic issues than the particular role of the built-environment. The challenge here lies in the need to incorporate other conceptualizations of public space that are concerned with the relationship between public space and the built environment or the making of the city.

❖ *The challenge of considering urban sites in the city as irrelevant*

Through the incorporation of alternative definitions of public space from different disciplines, mainly those that do not necessarily focus on the physical public space a challenge might occur. This challenge could be manifested in not giving the role of the built-environment the attention it ought to gain, particularly in urban research. With the rise of the virtual public space, the role of the physical space in some of the literature, e.g. online social networks, tends to be dismissed (Iveson 2007). Nonetheless, spatial structures or materialistic configuration of public space in the city plays a key role within the dynamics of *public-making*. For “[...] *the link between public space and public culture should be traced to the total dynamic—human and non-human—of a public setting*” (Amin 2008, p.8). ‘*Human and non-human*’ in Amin’s quote refers to a complex relationship between groups of people and other objects or masses that constitutes a materialistic configuration, namely, a spatial setting.

In Actor Network Theory (ANT), Latour maintains that the networks of social relations constitute both, human and non-human actors, constantly interacting and changing. In that sense society and technology (or artifacts in general) are inseparable in these social assemblages. One of the main challenges in analyzing social relations in today's age of technology is that there are ever more silent actions; the use of words is reduced, since the engineers, who are the authors of these technologies, delegate various characters to their engineered artifacts. This results in the loss of nuanced characteristics that defines the role of materiality in various processes. As such, people tend to dismiss the social aspect of these "inhuman" techniques (Latour, B. 1992). Furthermore, in an attempt to answer the question of *what would an object-oriented democracy look like?* (Latour, B. 2005b, p.14), Latour’s key argument is on the relevance of *Matter* or *things* to political philosophy and by extend to the public concern. Latour’s critic on political representation is premised on giving supremacy to the, *who* (referring to the *publics*) over the *what* (referring to an assembly of material and non-material *things* as an object of the public debate). In his view, more attention is ought to be given to the *materiality* of public concerns in democratic theory (*ibid*).

Observing the role material aspects of space plays- in Lefebvre's terms, the spatial arrangements of a city, within his dialectic triad- it is the built environment that enables social relations, activities and social interactions to crystalize (1991 [1974]). The material form of an ideological project that has been intellectually and textually determined is spatially represented via a scientific code as a *representation of space*. Thus, this material configuration is used as a symbolic object that manifests various meanings based on the imagination of individuals" [...] *that expresses and evokes social norms, values, and experiences*" (Schmid 2008, p.37). "*Accordingly, the formative sites of urban public culture [public space]— collective forms of being human through shared practices—need not be restricted to those with a purely human/inter-human character, but should also include other inputs such as space, technological intermediaries, objects, nature and so on*"(Amin 2008, p.8). These arguments accentuate the imperatives of considering the materiality of public space, for building a coherent concept that neither confines its materiality to limited spatial forms in the city, nor dismisses its significance.

2.4 The dichotomy between *public* and *private*

A common challenge that some literature on public space faces is the dichotomy between public and private space as two distinct urban spaces. This research holds the view that there is always a dynamic process of various aspects that produces an urban space; among these aspects are *privacy* and *publicity* (Killian 1998). Therefore, space is neither only public nor only private (Lehtovuori 2005; Sheller, M. and J. Urry (2003); Ghannam 2002; Staeheli 1996; Nelson 1974).

Since, space is continuously changing, it is always in a state of becoming and thus, public and private aspects of space are considered as temporal states that are produced and experienced through a social process, by a certain social practice. The spatiality of public and private are constantly shifting and contemporary social life, cannot be defined by the fixed distinction of private and public domain, but rather it should be understood in reference to relationships between people, objects, images, information and machines (Sheller, M. and J. Urry 2003). In order to overcome such dichotomy, this research follows Killian's understanding of '*publicity*' and '*privacy*' as *power-relationships* in urban space; they co-exist as aspects of space and are continuously changing (Killian

1998). These power-relations are intrinsic to the production of *publicness*. At first glance this notion reminds us of the discussions by Kristine F. Miller on various examples of state-designated public spaces and POPs (Privately owned public space). For her, the degree to which a public space is actually ‘public’ is governed by various tangible and non-tangible aspects that keeps changing through history and thus affects the accessibility and degree of democracy of these places. This is mainly dependent on the dynamic relationship between public space and public spheres. Though the design and the form of physical public spaces plays an important role yet having a *concerned public* that governs and exert efforts in order to offer the best conditions that allows these places to be truly ‘public’ is a key factor (Miller, K. F. 2007). The underlying principle of linking physical urban spaces with a *concerned public* finds great affinity with this research. Yet, the resonance terminates here. While Miller attributes the aspects of public or private to the physical spaces themselves- premised on their ownership and degree of accessibility- this research attempts to detach the concepts of public and private from urban space and rather associate them to the type of process and activity taking place.

To provide an example, in order for a public park to be designated as ‘public’, certain rules and regulations (exclusionary rules) must be established. Those rules would protect a woman when jogging in the park from confronting bothersome actions- e.g. harassment (Killian 1998). In that way, this park becomes public by protecting a certain degree of privacy for that woman, otherwise, in her perspective, this park would not be considered as a ‘public’ park. On the other hand, if the park sets the rules of excluding the ‘*undesirables*’ (Killian 1998, p.125), this park is no longer considered public from their perspective. As such, even though the established rules of conduct designated the park as public, nonetheless, it depends on the *power of privacy* in order to maintain its *publicity* for a certain public. The previous examples provide an explanation on how the *power of privacy* and *publicity* changes according to the context and situation. Thus, privacy is in fact an essential aspect of social-relationships (Killian 1998). In that sense,

“**[privacy]** is a relational concept that is context bounded rather than a rigid dichotomy between two separate domains. [It is] the relationship between the self and others, [to] control [...] what, when, and how the self is to be seen by others. [Briefly put], it is the attempt to control who sees whom and under which

conditions [...] This makes it important to examine the role of social actors in negotiating and redefining the meaning of privacy” (Ghannam 2002, p.97-99).

Since privacy is an inevitable part of all spaces, its realization then becomes not a question of to whom this space is public or private, rather a question of *power*; the required power to make-public. Nevertheless, this power is neither directly realized by an individual to him/herself for the sake of gaining protection and maintaining his/her identity, nor by a dominant group excluding another (Killian 1998). The power to gain *the right of privacy* is rather constructed through social relationships, either formally or informally (through law, tradition, on the bases of respect, etc...) (Killian 1998), in other words, it is a constant process of negotiation. In addition, *public* and *private* are context-based concepts that are directly linked to the norms established in a given place.

Literature that separates between public and private is not limited to Western contexts. One of the distinct features of Arabic/Muslim life, depicted by orientalist literature-both European and Muslim/Arab born scholars - are the division between private and public, where private space is the space of women seen as dominated, controlled and limited, while the public is the space of men and the state, seen as the powerful, superior and the main decision-maker (Ghannam 2002). Thus, the notion of *accessibility* to public space, could rather question *which types* of public spaces are accessible to *which groups* (Ghannam 2002). These two aspects are intrinsic parts to the social structure of space. Only through social interaction does private or public gain their significances in space (Killian 1998).

Dovey makes a distinction between '*power over*' and '*power to*', while the former is a form of centered power that is manifested in force, domination and authority and seeks to control others, the latter, is considered as the capacity to achieve one's aim. This form of power, in a Foucaultian sense, is a "[...] *productive practice rather than a resource*"(Dovey 2010, p.14). It is based on "*productive capacities and micropractices*" (ibid, p.14). As such, based on the Foucaultian thoughts, *disciplinary power* seeks to eradicate differences, while the micro-practices power seeks to enhance them. Here, the form of power that is associated to social practices of everyday life, is one that is produced through social interactions. Similarly, Killian argues that the power of access or

exclusion should not be understood as a *commodity* that is provided or denied, it is rather a constantly produced and re-produced relationship according to the situation and the context (Killian 1998).

2.4.1 Negotiating power-relation through privacy and publicity of space

Nelson associates the notion of power, as social relation, to Olesen's concept of, "*Negotiated order*" (Olesen 1973 cited in Nelson 1974). Agents interacting in a given situation negotiate the rules that frame, characterize and determine that relationship (Nelson 1974). Here, Nelson draws the focus away from thinking of *power/domestic, public/private* and *men/women* as two separate worlds, towards looking at the interplay and the dynamics of such relationships (in his case women and men) (Nelson 1974). Thus, the question to ask is how certain groups (normatively "*powerless*" or marginalized) negotiate with other, groups, ('normatively' dominating), to realize their goals. In other words, how do they produce or make use of the "*power to*" (Dovey 2010).

Under authoritarian regimes, as observed in the "Arab spring", when the streets become places for contestation and threatens the prevailing systems through large scale mobilizations, referred to as "*street politics*" (Bayat 2010), the state resorts to "[...] *normalizing violence, erecting walls and checkpoints, as a strategic element of everyday life* (Bayat 2010 p. 12). In these occasions, spaces normatively designated as private display an opportunity for the resilience of processes that counters state surveillance. In that sense, privacy becomes an asset or a form of power that empowers counter-publics. In Cairo elite norms contradict with those of other city dwellers, "normal" gestures of middle- and upper-middle women might be misread and expose them to harassment or unwanted gaze. As a result, they confine themselves to exclusive public spaces in order to freely practice the way of life and dress codes that suits them (de Koning 2009). Here, upper-middle women resorted to privacy as a power to exclude undeserved or annoying actions.

By framing Killian's view, on "*public and private as coexisting relationships in space*" within Nelson's notion of power and the concept of "*negotiated order*" (Nelson, C. 1974), such power- the power to exclude and the power to access- has to be continuously

negotiated, otherwise, “[...] *public and private space are meaningless terms in the absence of social interaction*” (Killian 1998, p.124).

The struggle then is not over access or visibility in “public” space, rather, over finding a space in the city, where different *publics* can be active (Staheli 1996). Inspired by Walter Benjamin’s notion of “*thresholds*”-where the city is always open for new discoveries- Stavrides finds the city of urban commons not as clusters of accessible public places to all, but rather as a network of spaces at once rightful to all inhabitants and no one. It is not pre-established given, claimed by powerful groups but an ongoing process of new encounter and spatiotemporal experience (Stavrides, S. 2015). In that sense, the city could be regarded as a network of opportunities constantly negotiated by different publics.

2.4.2 The dichotomy between public and private ‘spheres’

A similar dichotomy could also be found in discussions that makes a distinction between public and private *spheres*. Even though this concept is significant for democratic theory, in offering a conceptualization that enables the differentiation between three entities; “[...] *state apparatuses, economic markets, and democratic association*” (Fraser 1990, p.57) and despite the fact that Habermas’s public sphere does not reduce the various contesting *publics* under one public sphere (Benhabib 1992). It, actually allows for as many *publics* as necessary under the prerequisite that they are premised on “[...] *discursive justification of democratic politics*” (Benhabib 1992 p.119), where participation is formed by a “*practical discourse*” among those affected by the matter under discussion. Nonetheless, in some cases the notion of *public sphere* has been adopted as though there is only one public sphere that reflects the public interest. In reality, however, there are several groups with competing and conflicting interests, instead of one *public* (Iveson 2007). The challenge of the dominating public sphere is that it tends to present the interest of a specific dominating bourgeois group, yet claiming that it is the interest of the actual publics (Killian 1998).

Staheli emphasizes that even though the distinction between public and private are accurately defined in Habermas’ concept, yet, the problematic lies in the way different

literature adopt and interpret those definitions. Staeheli argues that there is a need to re-conceptualize the relationship between the *privacy* and *publicity*, where the “[...] *content of action* [should be separated from] *the space where the action took place*” (Staeheli 1996, p.601). For Staeheli, such separation will result in assessing the action -in her case women’s activism- based on its efficiency and not on the access or exclusion from the public sphere. This in turn, will provide a clear picture on how action in private spheres influences and shapes actions and debates in the public sphere.

CHAPTER 03

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

From the above presented review, it could be observed how each standpoint apprehends a certain aspect of urban public space that is based on their conceptualization of urban space. Although the previously presented perspectives on public space bear insightful reflections that ought to be considered in any conceptualization of public space, nonetheless, urban public space is neither only a physical public space in the city, nor a mere social relation represented by the public sphere (Iveson 2007), rather, it is regarded as a *process* or a *space-time contingency* (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]). Given the challenges that the previous conceptualizations bear, various scholars sought to build frameworks that provides an alternative understanding of the make-up of urban public space and its production- as will be discussed in this chapter.

The theoretical framework of this research is based on two strands; the first is concerned with articulations that have sensibility towards the dynamic and ever changing nature of the urban. Thus, dealing with urban phenomena takes the stance of understanding a *process*; approaching the object of study as an assembly of elements (human and non-human) constantly connecting and re-connecting in different relationships (Amin 2008; Latour, B. 2005a).

The second focuses on the role of materiality, and by extent the city, in this process and understands it as an unfixed assembly of affordances. This view finds affinity with a new paradigm shift that alternatively frames this relationship as “*spatial publicness*” (Yang 2017), “*practices of publicness*” (Quian 2014), or “*urban forms of public address*” (Iveson 2007). Although differently articulated but they share the same concerns, namely, trying to conceptualize new understanding of the relationship between the city and *the production of publicness*, which is manifested in the urban landscape of *publicness*. The definition of *publicness* is understood in this research, as defined by Amin 2008 and coined by Massey (2005); a “*throwntogetherness*’. It is the multiplicity of

difference, the “*juxtaposition of global diversity and difference in contemporary urban life*” (Amin 2008, p.10). *Publicness*, is not only tolerating difference and allowing diversity to thrive within a society, but it could also be expanded to entail a civic culture of actively engaging and exerting efforts to realize a collective goal

The production of this *publicness* - or alternatively referred to as *public-making* (Iveson 2007) - is a limitless space-time contingency, governed by complex, multi-dimensional process. By adopting the philosophical view of space as an assembly of heterogeneous elements, the form of *public-making*, in that sense, is not limited to its physical form; the form of the urban site where an action took place. Rather, it is all aspects involved in the *process*. Lefebvre’s concept of social space finds great affinity with the notion of assembly (Lehtovuori 2011).

Lefebvre articulates the *form of social space* as an “[...] ‘*encounter, assembly, simultaneity*’ But what assembles, or what is assembled? The answer is: everything that there is in space, everything that is produced either by nature or by society, either through their co-operation or through their conflicts. Everything: living beings, things, objects, works, signs, and symbols” (Lefebvre 1991 [1974], p. 101).

The multiplicity of *publicness* could be found in a conceptual framework laid out by Kurt Iveson (2007) and will be adopted in this research. Iveson combines three inseparable dimensions of *publicness* (2007):

- **“*publicness as ‘a/the public’*”**
Considers the way different social groups, individuals or inhabitants take actions as a *collective actor* for *public-making* (Iveson 2007).
- ***publicness as Public address***
Refers to as a kind of action (Iveson 2007); the mode of action undertaken plays a significant role in this process. Hence, *publicness* is simultaneously the groups involved and the action they are employing.
- **“*publicness as a context for action*”**

It is the material structure of the action undertaken in the process. It is concerned with the way the city is used. This is the “*urban dimension of public-making; the ‘urban space’*” (Iveson 2007, p.8).

The following section will discuss, in-depth, the above conceptualization of *publicness* and unpack each of the three dimensions. These dimensions of *publicness* are a contingency; they can only exist in relation to the other. Thus, unpacking them, only serves as a way to better understand their make-up. Iveson’s concept refers to a process of making a *public*, which is not understood as symbolic discursive formation (Deutsche 1992); rather the concept denotes processes that constitute three inseparable dimensions of *publicness*. In other words, the making of *publics* is contingent to both their action (*public address*) and the conditions that enable their realization (*urban space as the context of their action*) (2007).

This notion of public space resonates with Amin’s conceptualization of public space. For Amin, public space, what he calls “*situated surplus*” or “*situated multiplicity*”, is an *assemblage* of space. It is a process where several elements (activities, processes of urban change, *actants* (both human and non-human) and enforced order (by means of regulations and norms), are all interwoven with each other (Amin 2008).

3.1 From ‘the’ public towards *multiple counter-publics*

Fraser emphasizes on the need to empower multiple *public spheres* (called: “*subaltern counter-publics*”); meaning alternative parallel publics of marginalized social groups. Here, the agents of marginalized social groups “[...] *invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and need*” (Fraser 1990, p.67).

They are useful for “*expanding discursive space*” (Fraser 1990, p.67), in terms of opening new discursive arenas for topics and issues that are intentionally kept away from public debates. A “*multiplicity of publics*” plays another significant role:

- First, for the cultural diversity in these societies to survive, it is essential for the various cultural groups to construct discourses using expressions that reflect their identity.
- Second, as mentioned before, public spheres are not neutral arenas that accept all cultural differences without any forms of exclusions, therefore, different public spheres allow different cultural modes of expressions to construct their discourses (Fraser 1990).

Discursive interactions entails the circulation and distribution of ideas and information among a wider public realm, thus, agents of any limited/small publics consider themselves as *potentially* part of a wider public, therefore, despite the limitation of some *publics*, they are not “*ethnic enclaves*”. This means that the *subaltern counter-publics* function, simultaneously, as spaces of “*withdraw and re-grouping*” (Fraser 1990, p.68) into alternative groups or merging and remerging (Sohn, H., Kousoulas, S., Bruyns, G., 2015), and as spaces for actions toward a broader public. For the coexistence of egalitarianism, cultural diversity and democratic participation, communication across diverse cultural groups is essential. Thus, the existence of several limited publics is not satisfactory for egalitarianism, cultural diversity and democratic participation. Rather, it is the acknowledgement of the differences and construction of communication channels between them that is essential to the concept of *subaltern counter-publics* (Fraser 1990).

3.1.1 The making of multiple counter-publics

In his discussion on “*Publics and counter-publics*” (2002), Warner explores the different ways a *public* is constructed. *publics* can only be explained in relation to their *public address* and vice versa. While the term *public address* suggests addressing others in public, via a *text-based* action that aims at sharing a certain view with various publics (Warner 2002), yet the concept here is taken a step further, by building a connection between the essence of Warner’s concept and Lefebvre’s *right to the city*- “[among other rights, it is] *the right of users to make known their ideas on the space and time of their*

activities in urban areas” (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]., p. 34)⁹. Here, the process of making one’s concern known or public is not limited to the circulation of a text-based view, but rather entails a socio-spatial practice. Thus, *public address* in this research is understood as the process of circulating a common concern by practicing and experimenting it in various ways- to follow Latour’s line of thinking and drawing from law and Urry concept of ‘*enactment*’, *publics* could be considered as the momental crystallization of certain assembly revolved around a *matter-of-concern* (Latour 2005b) and *public address* could be understood as the process, by which the concerned public is constantly re-imagining their world and the way they approach its realization or enactment (Law, J. and Urry, J. 2004). Most importantly, publics and their public address are in a constant symbiotic relationship. This brings us to the same point of view held by Fraser; since all public spheres are inevitably exclusive, then we ought to focus on the conditions that open possibilities for the production of multiple *public spheres* and widen the arena of alternative processes of world making (Iveson 2007; Fraser 1992) and ways of its making (Law, J. and Urry, J. 2004).

3.2 Public address as a counter-urban practice

The concept of public space, here is not limited to a certain type of actions; rather, other types of actions, even those regarded as conventional everyday life activities, under certain circumstances, make public. Being performed in contexts where they are regarded as challenging to the norms of that place. Benhabib highlights that challenging and questioning the conventional mode of production, what she refers to as “*reflexivity*”¹⁰, is intrinsic to the *public-making* (Benhabib 1992). The main thesis of this section is that *public address* is in its essence a *counter-urban practice*. This lies in the type of action undertaken, where actions that attempt to actively challenge the norms are regarded as processes of *public-making*. Nonetheless, a prerequisite for this process is both the

⁹ This definition was pointed out by Peter Marcuse, as one of Lefebvre’s detailed elaborations on what *the right to the city* might entail (Marcuse 2009).

¹⁰ The concept of *reflexivity* in anthropology means: “[...] *the creative intensity of a possibility that loosens us from habit and custom and turns back to contemplate ourselves*” (Myerhoff and Ruby 1982, p.1) (See: Nazaruk, Maja (2001) *Reflexivity in anthropological discourse analysis* and Myerhoff, Barbara and Ruby, Jay (eds.). 1982. *The Cracked Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology*)

publics involved and the materialistic *affordability* of the urban space for the intended action; at once is the means of its creation and its constraining factor.

One of the crucial notions about *public address* discussed by Warner is the *reflexivity* and circulation of discourse- which finds affinity with Benhabib's argument, presented above. Moreover, since *the public* is understood as “[...] *an ongoing space of encounter*” (Warner 2002, p.420), *publics* are not bound to the co-presence of individuals, rather, “[...] *public spheres are social imaginaries that are always in the making*”(Iveson 2007, p. 26). The making of these “*social imaginaries*” takes place through public address. If we take Graffiti as an example of *public address*, it becomes clear that what makes public in that case is not necessarily the co-presence of the *addressees* and the *addressers*“(Iveson 2007; Warner 2002), rather, it is the mutual discourse or the common horizon that they share, manifested in the content of the Graffiti and enabled by the material configuration where the Graffiti was created. Furthermore, since the co-presence of the *publics* involved is not a prerequisite, public address could take different forms. Yet, before discussing the forms of public address it is important to first discuss the type of actions considered as public address.

De Certeau distinguishes between two types of actions, *strategies* and *tactics*. *Strategies* are rationally constructed models or systems that follow the logic of a powerful entity; the state, private enterprises and scientific knowledge. *Strategies* are produced by the abstraction of the power-relations, in other words, the separation between the symbolic power of an entity and the context where it operates; its environment (De Certeau 1984 [1980]). This type of practice deals with space as a “[...] *scientific space or a blank page to be written on*” (*ibid*, p.24), regardless of the situation where it is produced. *Tactics* have no fixed scheme; they do not depend on an abstract logic of space. Unlike strategy, *tactics* give supremacy to time over space. As elaborated by de Certeau, *tactics* refer to the “*ways of operating*” (De Certeau 1984 [1980], p. xix); the ways combinations between the heterogeneous elements are assembled, it is about the “*maneuvers*” and “*clever tricks*” (De Certeau 1984 [1980]). *Tactics* are ways of operating that, although it operates within the same system, yet “[...] *these styles of action [...] introduce into [the system] a way of turning it into their advantage*” (De Certeau 1984 [1980]), p.30).

For de Certeau, a *diversionary practice* is a form of tactic that manipulates the produced or imposed space (De Certeau 1984 [1980]). A similar notion to this type of practice is depicted by Lefebvre, in his distinction between *appropriation* and *diversion*, or *creation and reuse*. For Lefebvre, *appropriation* is a creation; it “resembles a work of art” (Lefebvre 1991 [1974], p.165) while *diversion* refers to the re-*appropriation* of an existing space. The change of an original use of an old station into a market hall is an example of re-*appropriation*. Although *diversion* is a temporary vulnerable moment of change that has not resulted in complete *appropriation*, it is however intrinsic for the imagination and production of a ‘new space’ (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]).

Concepts similar to *reuse* and *diversion*, at the heart of the Situationists International’s techniques¹¹ is a practice called “*detournement*” or (*diversion*), meaning the reintegration of the productions into a new milieu, giving these productions a new meaning that is bound by the situational use and not the object or the product itself (Knabb 1981). A similar technique is called *derive*¹² (*drift*); it is “a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society” (Knabb 1981, p.109); it is” [...] *the practice of a passionate journey out of the ordinary through a rapid changing of ambiances*” (Debord, G. 2006 [1957], p.74-75). Both practices (*diversion and drift*) depict the act of changing the ordinary or the existing urban-environment by means of small-scale interventions in the everyday life (Sadler 1998). Although the Situationists International movement was dissolved around 1972, yet, their views and ideas contributed to today’s urban activism (Yang 2017; Finn, D. 2014). Urban activism in this research is understood as a reflexive action that challenges the norms or certain hegemonic-powers for creating opportunity for the achievement of alternatives- thus *public address* could be considered as urban activism.

¹¹ “The Situationists International (SI) were a group of French (later also British) intellectuals of a varied background. The Situationists sought to re-negotiate the relationship between man (society), and art, economy and technology during the ‘50s until ‘70s. The urban environment was one of the areas on which they formulated extensive theories. It should be remarked that the attitude of the group was distinctly Marxistic, and that their ideas were often ways of dealing with the Marxist notion of revolution.” (Paans and Pasel 2014, p.11)

¹² This concept was introduced in Guy Debord and Asger Jorn’s “psychogeographic” remapping of Paris, entitled ‘The Naked City’ (1957). Psychogeographic map is about exploring unpredicted and playful practices in the urban environment to form new experiences out of the ordinary. The aim was to enhance a different vision of the city and urban space (Debord (2006) [1957])

The types of **today's urban activism** vary widely; it is however not within the scope of this section to discuss them in details. The variations of these practices do not only depend on their attributes, but also on the places where they are undertaken. Although professionals, government bodies and private investors might be involved, yet, it is essentially a bottom-up practice, in the sense that it does not fall under the censorship of a certain entity. It is considered as the milieu through which inhabitants and users continuously re-appropriate urban space and actively bring new methods for urban interventions (Brenner, N. 2015). Thus, this kind of urbanism does not follow a certain approach, it rather falls under a “*general rubric*” that is experimental in its nature (Brenner, N. 2015).

Although contemporary urban activism is often discussed under the aegis of the *Right to the city* movement, since it is influenced by a long tradition of urban movements that started in the 1960s and 1970s, yet, it has evolved and gone through different phases of changes, breaking it down into various forms; some were institutionalized and adopted by international NGOs, few maintained the revolutionary principles of the Lefebvrian concept, while several were hijacked and harnessed for neoliberal agendas (Mayer, M. 2009; Brenner, N., Marcuse, P. and Mayer, M. 2009). Other forms of institutionalized planning efforts have evolved on the bases of this trend and share the same normative principle, particularly in terms of making cities more just (Fainstein, S. 2014). As Fainstein articulates it, ensuring a democratic process and the right to participate in decision making, fostering multiculturalism and diversity through social differentiation without exclusion and aspiring to achieve equity in relation to the outcomes of planning policies and strategies are all guiding principles that form the backbone of debates on the *right to the city* and urban justice (Fainstein, S. 2014). While it is commonly agreed that the rise of these practices is a result of the current urban inequality, commodification, and gentrification among other urban challenges that are seen all over the world (Harvey 2012; Finn 2014), where they emerge in the context of failed provision of basic services (Brenner 2015). Yet the relationship between attempting to reach a universal definition of the *right to the city* that is and at the same time identifying an approach towards its realization, is a controversial topic. In this discourses, scholars often contradict on whether democratic process or just outcome ought to take precedence and have better

potentials in realizing urban justice. Along the process of identifying the best approaches to address injustice, they all acknowledge the key role of the city and urban space in any project (Fainstein, S. 2014).

Accordingly, *Counter-urban practices* are contingent to the conditions that lead to their production. They do not isolate themselves from their context, since they are based on the ‘opportunities’ that are offered in different environments. Their production is based on an assemblage of “heterogeneous elements”- these elements constitute the capacities of the social agents, the know-how, their common interests and the potentials hidden in the surrounding environment (Certeau 1984 [1980]). In the process of *public-making*, the context represents the urban dimension of *publicness*” (Iveson 2007, p.8). The contingency between the action and its environment was a key to the Situationists thinking as well as Lefebvre’s theory. As mentioned before, it was based on a *unitary* approach to urbanism; the assemblage of all elements of the social process. The Situationists’ actions ultimately lead to ‘unitary urbanism’ (Debord 2006 [1957]). It is unitary in that it makes use of all human and non-human components of the environment and brings them together into new combinations or by means of a new use. This reveals “[...] a relation between substance and contingency, [it] relates to the openness of the process, the action of experiencing space and the structure of events in relation to their spatial coherence” (Wolfrum, 2008, p.40-41).

These same lines of thinking could be found in other accounts, namely, DeLanda’s *urban assemblages* (DeLanda, M. 2006) and Latour’s ANT (Latour, B. 2005a). Both share different articulations of the notion of *urban assemblages*- assembling heterogeneous elements connected in certain forms or relationships and is continuously detaching and reassembling in new connections. Moreover, urban social reality is not seen as one overarching assemblage of elements or one network of relationships, but rather multiple assemblages always in the becoming. This perspective is a flexible tool that opens new ways of understanding and discovering new social processes. In that sense “the city is [...] contingent, situated, partial and heterogeneous achievement” (Farías, I. 2009, p. 15). The role of the material environment provides the inhabitants with chances and opportunities for the intended action. This concept reveals the interconnectedness between the three dimensions of *publicness*, where the urban dimension, the type of

practice, and the role of *publics*, as active agents in the *public-making*, resemble the production of a situated assembly. In order to understand the role of the *urban dimension* (the city) in the *public-making*, we need to examine how the materiality of public actions is combined, produced and re-produced for public address and undertaken by different publics (Iveson 2007). It is rather the different combinations between the three dimensions (*publics*, *public address* and *the urban context*, Iveson 2007) as a contingency (Diagram 3), than the mere imagination of the physical form of a certain public space that is considered significant in the process of *public-making*.

Production of publicness is a multi-dimensional process

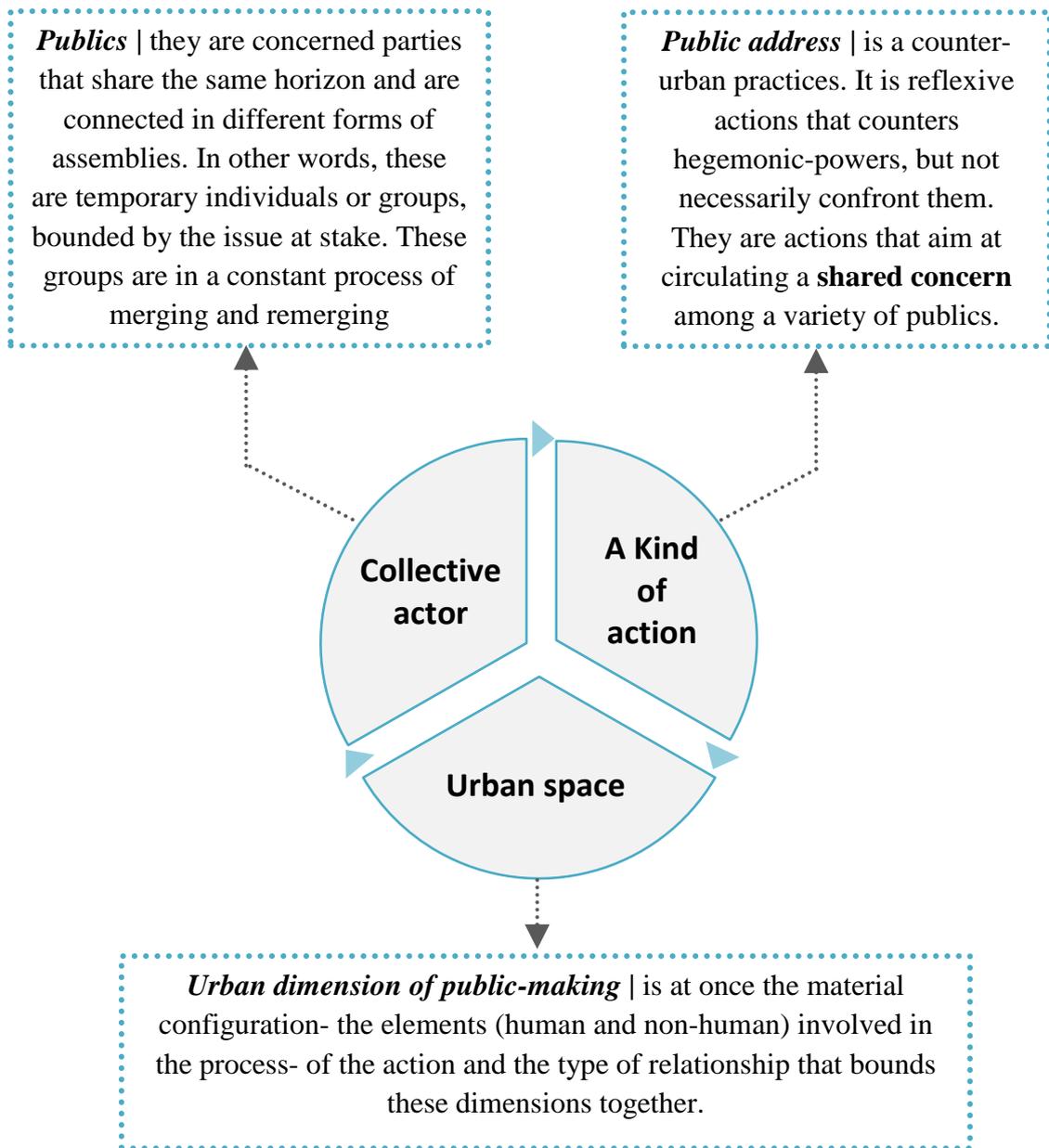


Diagram 3: Diagram elaborates three dimensions of public-making and the adopted definition of each one.
Source: diagram prepared by author

3.3 The role of the city in *public-making*

Laid out by Iveson (2007), these relationships show how cities (and urban spaces in cities) can be used for *public-making*; “As Venues for public Address “; as “Objects of public debate” and/or ‘The city’ as ‘the public’” (Iveson 2007, p.32) (See: Diagram 4). The **first** entails that each urban space in the city offers different potentials for various kinds of *counter-practices*. Venue in this research refers to an assembly of materiality and other elements in a certain form of relationship. In that sense it could be understood as network (Latour,B. 2015a). In the **second**, these urban spaces (*venues*) might become themselves the *object of debate* upon which the counter-practice predicates, whereby established norms, ideologies, rules of conduct -or even mode of production- is challenged. This type of practice is marked by its *reflexivity* (Benhabib, 1992). In the **third** form, during this process -challenging the mode of production - contesting visions of how to produce urban space is constructed by various publics. Here, the city or the image of the city is used as a representative of ‘the public’.

In this process the dominating publics often obliterate the interests of other subaltern publics, claiming that their interests represent ‘the public’. In order to counter this hegemonic public sphere, various publics are made and remade on the premises of contesting visions of the city. These three forms of *public-making* (developed by Iveson 2007), are always in interplay with each other, the city or urban space might be simultaneously *venue* and *object* of public debate. The following section presents each form in details.

Conceptual Framework

Three Forms of public-making

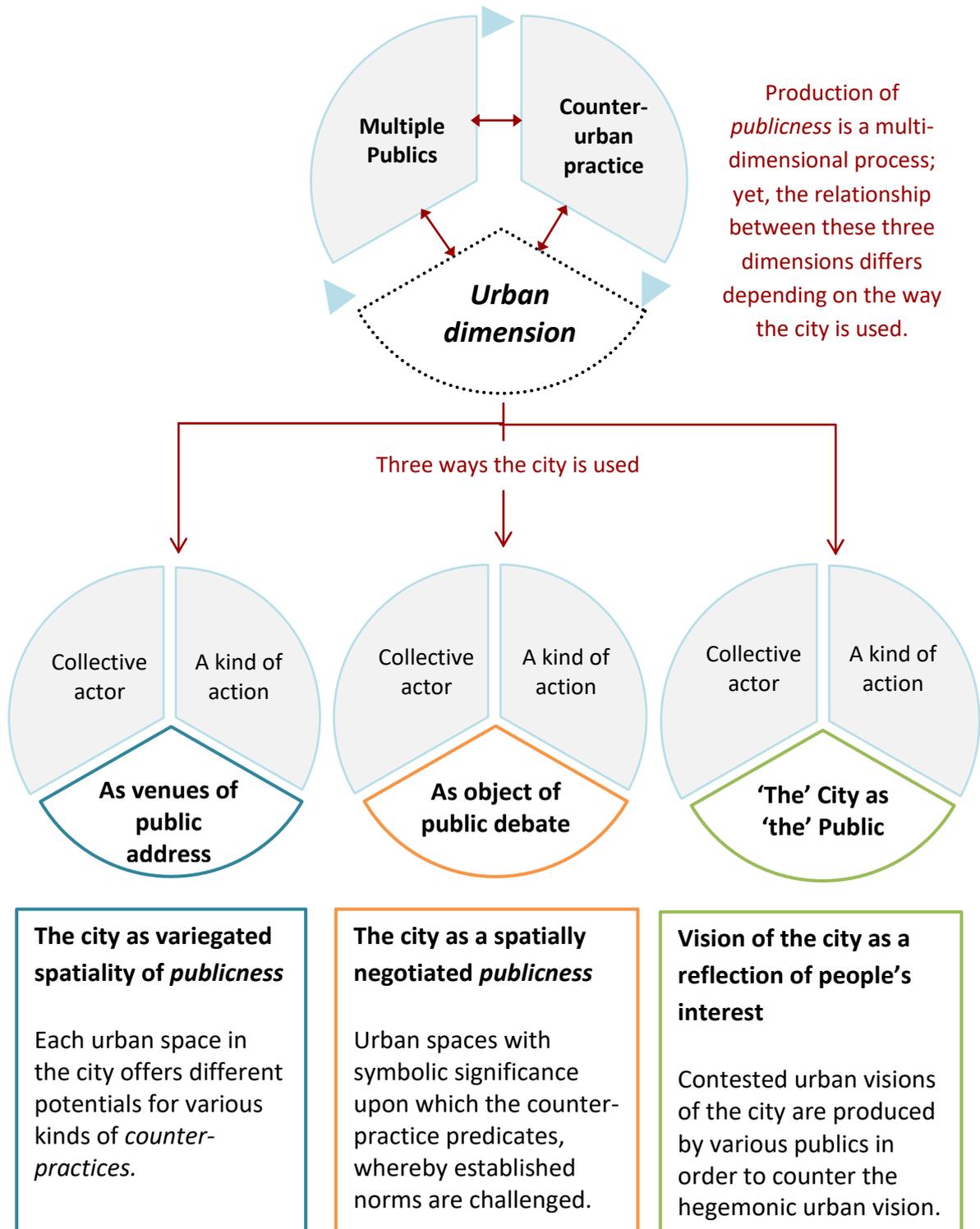


Diagram 4: diagram shows the three different ways the city is used to produce *publicness*

Source: information adopted from (Iveson 2007), compilation and diagram prepared by author

3.3.1 The city as variegated spatiality of *publicness*

Each site in the city has potentials to offer for various kinds of *counter-urban practices*. Some kinds of *public address* need a particular site in the city, others can be realized in several kinds of sites or make use of a combination of different sites and materialities. Choosing a certain *venue* for *public-making* depends on the *counter-urban practice* that are intend and the *publics* we want to address, which in turn requires “*imagining and ‘finding’*” (Iveson 2007, p. 35) a specific site for that *public*. This makes the issue of accessibility more relevant to that specific *public* rather than ‘open for all’ (Fainstein, S. 2014). Certain forms of *public address* depend on the limited accessibility of the sites they use. Thus, the concept of using urban spaces in the city as *venues* predicates on the *affordability* of each urban space in relation to the intended *counter-urban practice*. As Iveson puts it, *public address*” [...] *is an act of the imagination* [that involves] *calculations about where those others might be, and what opportunities that ‘where’ can afford*” (Iveson 2007, p. 35). This notion of affordability resonates with the concept of *Affordance*¹³ in architecture and design.

3.3.1.1 The material affordance of urban space for public-making

Affordance as a concept has been mostly used in a technical manner for the practical application of designs (e.g. in architectural designs, industrial designs as well as artificial inelegance) (Maier JR *et al*, 2009). In the field of architecture, Maier JR *et al* identified two distinct types of *Affordance*. The first is *artifact-user affordances* (AUA), which looks at the relationship between the built environment and the users; here, the affordance, represents a symbiotic relationship between human and non-human:

" [...] individual properties of either the artifact (color, density, size, etc.) or the user (strength, age, height, etc.) are not in and of themselves affordances, but taken together can determine whether a specific affordance exists, such as the ability of a specific person to walk on a specific floor" (ibid, p.397).

¹³ It was adopted from the descriptive *theory of Affordance* developed by the ecological psychologist, James Gibson, in 1976 and later used for prescriptive conceptualization by Don Norman to discuss "*the Design of Everyday Things*" in 1988, in the field of usability engineering. In their research Maier JR *et al*, expanded Norman's concept to "*the design of all artifacts*" (Maier JR *et al* 2009, p.395).

This implicates that the individual characteristics, of the built environment and the user, separately, might not reflect an *affordance*. Rather, the coexistence of their characteristics in a specific relationship is considered as an *Affordance*. In short, "[...] *systems afford behaviors via their structure for a purpose*" (*ibid*, p.398).

The second type of affordance, *Artifact-Artifact Affordances* (AAA), is about the ability of one artifact to offer an opportunity by means of its relation to another artifact:

"[...] *an affordance expresses a relationship between two (or more) subsystems in which a behavior can manifest between the two subsystems that either subsystem cannot manifest in isolation*" (Maier JR *et al* 2009, p.397), (e.g. the ability of a door to open, or the movability of a wheelchair).

The notion of activating affordances by setting different elements in a certain relationship finds affinity with Latour's argument on how non-human *actants* /elements become *actors* once connected together in certain -human and non-human- network (1992).

The notion of affordance renders the *venues of public address* not necessarily as fixed sites in the city, where the public action could directly take place. Rather, these *venues* are seen as a set of various material elements, among them spaces in the city, combined together in a certain relationships, thus, providing an opportunity for an activity (Iveson 2007).

Therefore, without the other artifact (e.g. the internet), neither would the potentiality of the subsystem (e.g. a site in the city) be manifested, nor could the affordance itself be produced. In that sense not all public spaces in the city are similarly available for *public-making*, rather, the material structures of *publicness* vary. The city provides "[...] *different possibilities and opportunities for public action*" (Iveson 2007, p.13). This notion is echoed by Dovey, in what he calls "*the paradoxes of design*". While an 'active edge' is promoted by design guidelines for the creation of livable and safe urban spaces (Jacobs 1961; Gehl 2010), a 'dead edge' has the potentiality to afford the production of new social practices (Dovey 2016), (e.g. climbing walls or public film screenings...etc.). Thus, different urban settings allow different forms of *publicness*. Here, is important to note that for an artifact or relationship between two artifacts to display an affordance it

requires the existence of a *concern*. Thus the desired outcome must be put in relation to the process and means to realize it, for an affordance to emerge.

The built environment plays a significant role in various forms of affordance. For example, Semi-fixed objects, Fixed objects, Active Edges...etc. The goal is not to limit the city or sites in the city to these typologies, but rather to provide an understanding of the link between the interfaces¹⁴ and the practices it enables or suppress, to the extent that “*primary interfaces*” (between private and publicly designated physical space) give access to a variety of other “*secondary interfaces*”, since interface is understood as “[...] *a complex set of relations and forces*” (Dovey 2016, p.62).

As an attempt to stretch the flexibility of this form of *public address as a venue*, Iveson argues that” [...] *public address in urban venues is not a matter of static occupation*” (Iveson 2007, p. 34). In other words, the co-presence of the *publics* in the same physical site is not conditional for *public address*. To provide a concrete case, Iveson further explains that, in order to circulate a certain text (e.g. *a poster on the street*), this public address relies on the potentiality of a specific site where several passers will notice the poster, which does not require the co-presence of all those involved in the action. Nor is the use of one urban site exclusive to that public address, since, through *mediatization*, this text could further reach a wider arena of *publics* than the passersby, who are physically present at the site of the poster (Iveson 2007). Here, the affordance of the built environment lies in its locational ability to sustain a hanged poster that would be seen by many passersby, who could potentially themselves share it with other *publics*. Moreover, it reflects the variety of form of the public address, where publics might resort to a fusion of different activities of their public-making, screening, publishing, performing, discussing...etc.

The affordance of the built environment is not exclusive to its tangible aspects. It could be manifested by means of other non-tangible characteristics. For instance, the

¹⁴ Dovey’s classification provides an insightful way to think of how different levels of social interaction are contingent to the type of interface (See: Dovey 2016, Chapter 7, pp. 57-69).

character, meaning or identity of an urban site could manifest a certain affordance for *counter-urban practice*. In that sense, mapping the affordances for *public-making* is not exclusive to material elements, for other factors are cardinal for the activation of certain affordances. For example, the performance or operation of a certain site, the forms of practices and the ways it is used, could become affordances for a certain action. This type of affordance allows for another form of counter-social practice, where urban sites in the city are not only ‘*venues for public address*’ but rather an ‘*objects of public debate*’ (Iveson 2007). This brings us to the second form, where the city becomes a spatially negotiated publicness.

3.3.2 The city as a spatially negotiated *publicness*

The normative uses established in a given place, are based on the identities attached to it (Iveson 2007). When the inhabitants of the city challenge those norms and redefine different ways for adopting a place, then they are

“[...] making that place the object (as distinct from the venue) of public address. This is a second urban dimension of public address, which is concerned with the circulation of contested representations of urban places [original not bold]”
(Iveson 2007, p.37).

Before exploring this type of public address, since it engages with the concept of *place*, it requires presenting the definition of *place* used in this research. Cresswell argues that, the concept of *place* is similar to Lefebvre’s (social) *space* in many aspects. *Space* and *place* are always in a state of interchange and co-dependent on each other (Cresswell 2004). Hence, they ought to be understood as a unified concept (Massey 1994). Although, both *space* and *place* are dynamic, continuously changing, have a multiplicity and are imbedded in everyday life, yet, there is a distinction between both concepts. *Place* is seen as an intense and more consistent concept, while *space* is seen as an abstract concept (Dovey 2016; Massey 1994). As Dovey puts it, “*Place is a form of identity, at once social and spatial*” (Dovey 2016, p.106). *Places are social constructions; they constitute the “[...] processes of meaning production and the practices of power”* (Cresswell 2004, p.122). On the other hand, as mentioned before, social *space* is understood as a (social)

process that engages social, physical and mental aspects in a dialectical relationship (Lefebvre 1991 [1974].). space is” *a simultaneity of multiple trajectories*” (Massey 2005, p.61); it is a “*configuration of social relations*” (Massey 1994, p.3). In other words, space is a multiplicity of social processes that are simultaneously occurring through time.

These processes are not necessarily harmonious and parallel, they are in many cases conflictual and in contradiction with each other. Since it is not the intention of this research to discuss the conceptual differences between space and place, thus, briefly, in the view of this research, place changes by means of space, for space is the (social) process that transforms place and brings it into being. While this research is interested in understanding the *public-making* of urban space, it is in-separable from the concept of *place*. For, it is about the (social) process by which *publicness* is produced *in* a given place (as venue), *by* a given place (as an object of public debate) or, when various contested forms of identities (places) are generalized under ‘one’ identity, as will be discussed later.

3.3.2.1 Negotiating urban spaces for normalizing a non-normative action or creating a space for counter-normative use

Returning back to this form of public address (urban sites as *object of public debate*), the way we use sites in the city as *venues for public address* is highly dependent on what we expect to be a ‘normal’ action in a particular place (Iveson 2007). The norms of a given place are a set of pre-identified ways of socio-spatial behavior that are attached to a certain place in order to make it familiar, “[...] *predictable and thereby governable*” (Iveson 2007, p.36). In other cases these norms are linked to cultural aspects and determine what constitutes an accepted behavior in public. As Amin puts it:

“ [...] ethical practices in public space are formed pre-cognitively and reflexively rather than rationally or consciously, guided by routines of neurological response and material practice, rather than by acts of human will. The vitality of the space, its functional and symbolic interpretation, its material arrangements, the swirl of the crowd, the many happenings form a compulsive field of action and orientation” (Amin 2008, p.11)

Thus, the material settings of produced social spaces and the unconscious daily routines, together forms a contingency that creates norms of behavior associated to that certain material setting, perceived by various groups as a place and by extent an identity. In the same vein, Dovey discusses the ways by which we unconsciously experience the city in our everyday life. He states that we “[...] consume its mythologies without critical thought” (Dovey 2013, p.88). Thus, inducing a sense of criticality, by means of re-arranging its martial structure (or re-appropriating the urban space), is a form of a non-normative actions that aims at challenging these established routines. In other cases this action takes the form of counter-normative¹⁵ practice in order to challenge the norms. Nonetheless, this is not to render social groups as passive inhabitants; rather, it is to shed a light on how the state or other private entities use power of place- identity to retain certain rules of conducted under control. Yet, despite the aims of such totalitarian efforts at gaining full ‘power over’ space, they are by no means in control of space production (Iveson 2007; Amin and Thrift 2002; Lefebvre 1991 [1974].). For, Places do not bear one single fixed identity but rather multiple identities that are continuously changing (Dovey 2010; Massey 1994). They are produced through social interactions that are in many cases conflictual. Furthermore, as Massey argues, places are not bounded to a location or certain geometrical configuration; rather, places are shared identities that could be globally experienced and shared among various social groups (Massey 1994). Here, there are two important points to be registered. First, challenging the norms of a certain place is a process of contesting identities. Second, places could have both, local and global dimensions that are in a continuous process of interplay. Thus, challenging the norms of use of a place as *local* processes of contestation is directly linked to *globally* produced identities. In that sense, this form of public address highlights the role of the built environment in negotiating place identities that are locally framed and has global inter-linkages or challenging normalized processes of space production.

Moreover, undertaking a counter- practice for contesting certain norms that are enforced by any entity is not only a matter of staging contestations about these norms, through

¹⁵ Although a ‘non-normative action’ and ‘counter-normative use’ might carry similar connotations, nonetheless, in this research the first refers to new modes of practices or new uses that did not exists before, while the latter refers to uses that are suppressed in a given society either due to cultural reasons or by strict censorship.

non-normative actions. In other cases, a *counter-public* might profit from the *invisibility* provided by certain venues or material structures in order to pursue a *counter-normative use* of that place (Iveson 2007). Since, these ‘uncritical’ daily routines, could “*[generate] social pathologies of avoidance, self-preservation, intolerance and harm, especially when the space is under-girded by uneven power dynamics and exclusionary practices*” (Amin 2006, p.11) Therefore, in this case counter-normative actions are better forms of actions in order to negotiate power and create a space for suppressed urban uses.

This notion is closely linked to the previous discussion on the dichotomy between *public* and *private* space. The existing ‘*ideological map of public and private*’, as Iveson argues, could be used in De Certeau’s sense (either *strategic* or *tactical*). Strategic actions could challenge the norms of certain place and attempt to normalize a non-normative action by staging this action among different *publics*. While tactical actions could seek an opportunity for pursuing a counter-normative use, by benefiting from the normatively ‘private’ space as a cover or protection (Iveson 2007).

3.3.3 ‘The city’ as ‘the public’: generalized identity of the city

While negotiating urban space as an *object of public debate*, the multiple publics attempt to *legitimize* their own interest in order to enforce their vision (Iveson 2007) Thus, “[...] *debates are legitimated with reference to the interests of ‘the city’*” (Iveson 2007, p.40). This process reveals a strong relationship between ‘the city’ and ‘the public’. Urban visions of the city usually predicate either on “*shared values* or “*shared interests*” (Iveson 2007). These two, are inevitably exclusionary urban visions, since, the difference of *values* and *interest* between various groups is an inherent aspect of the city, without which diversity and difference would be eradicated. Meanwhile, the *urban imaginary* that is built on “*shared fates*” reflects a vision that does not try to abolish the cultural and social diversity of the inhabitants. Here, the shared horizon that sets the frame for imagining the city and represents the subaltern counter- public is their “*identity as city-dwellers*” (Iveson 2007, p.45). In the same vein, for Latour the collective power that resides in our “*matters of concern*” surpasses the power of any other set of values or ideologies that we might share to mobilize us together towards a common cause (2005b).

“Each object gathers around itself a different assembly of relevant parties” (Latour 2005, p.15)

Thus, “[...] issues [or concerns] bind all of us in ways that map out a public space profoundly different from what is usually recognized under the label of “the political” (Latour, B. 2005b, p. 15). While it is ‘matters of concerns’ that makes ‘the public’ nonetheless, in the political realm the *matter of concern* seem to receive less attention in than “matters-of-facts” or proofs and assertions. Despite the fact that for if there is no ‘*matter of concern*’ the *public* would cease to exist. Therefore, instead of focusing on the question of, “How to represent, and through which medium, the sites where people meet to discuss their matters of concern”, Latour urges us to focus on “How do they assemble, and around which matters of concern” (*ibid.* 16). Doing so, we are more likely to connect with each other, since we are focused on the issue itself, regardless of our different view on the issue. Furthermore, it liberates us from the limited notion of ‘true’ public space as the only medium to discuss the matter of concern and alternatively, think of other means or venues to communicate.

This notion echoes with Amin’s argument that experiential effects of public space, what he refers to as “*situated surplus*”¹⁶, that is created through the interaction between humans and the built environment, is an unconscious collective experience, which contributes to the production of an urban public culture” [...] *of ease in the face of urban diversity and the surprises of multiplicity*” (Amin 2008, p.11). This notion resonates with the essence of *the right to the city*, for it acknowledges the exclusions that are generated by visions of the city. Given that *urban imaginaries* of the city cannot possibly include *interests* and *values* of all people, because their possibilities are also their limitations. Nevertheless, for such an urban imaginary to work- alternatively premised on “*shared fates*”- as Sandercock puts it,” [this] *demand the creation of a civic culture from the interactions of ‘multiple publics’* “(as cited in Iveson 2007, p.45), that enables them to co-exist in the city, even if in conflictual state. Nevertheless, since these various *multiple publics* (both *counter-public* spheres and official public spheres) may face an inevitable

¹⁶ As mentioned before, for Amin, “*situated surplus*” or “*situated multiplicity*” is an assemblage of space interwoven with several elements: activities, processes of urban change, *actants* (both human and non-human) and enforced order by means of regulations and norms (Amin 2008).

contestation over the claim that their interest reflects ‘the public’. Henceforth, the co-existence of different *publics* should be premised on the interests of achieving the *common good*, rather than achieving the interests of a seemingly homogenous public. Such a notion then is sensible towards the inherent difference and contradictions among the various publics.

- ***Conclusion of the theoretical part***

On a certain level, *public-making* might find affinity with the concept of *commoning*-understood as “*differentiated publicness*” (Sohn, H., Kousoulas, S. and Bruyns, G., 2015) - in terms of sharing the resources of a certain urban space by various groups with conflicting interest and finding new forms of collective life. Nonetheless, the focus is slightly different. Though in the making of a *public*, *commoning*, seems to play an inevitable role, yet it is rather the re-appropriation of existing latent potentials of urban space for strengthening and circulating a counter-hegemonic concern that the *public-making* framework focuses on. In that sense, the continuous flow of a concern through a wider socio-spatial network takes precedence.

This conceptual understanding redirects the discussion away from envisioning a limited definition of the *right to the city*, towards a broader understanding of the intrinsic negotiations of power relations that dictates the whole production process of urban space (Lefebvre 1991[1974].). Therefore, the essence of urban activism lies in its ability to reconfigure an alternative process of space production. In this regard, when discussing the role of physical urban space in the making of the *public*, instead of questioning the different designs that promote a true ‘public’ space, the discussion is rather diverted towards questioning the role of the city in empowering or opening opportunities for different groups (Ievson 2007) to experiment new modes of power-relations. It focuses on open ended processes, unpredicted possibilities and continuous negotiations. Nevertheless, this does not aim to undermine the significance of questions regarding the design of liberating urban spaces (Miller, K. F. 2007). Before presenting the empirical work of this research, the following chapter will provide a review of the literature about Downtown Cairo, in order to familiarize the reader with the background of the area of the study.

CHAPTER 04

4. DOWNTOWN CAIRO'S URBAN HISTORY

This chapter will chronologically present the urban history of *Downtown Cairo* from the initiation of the master plan of 1867 till shortly after the revolution in 2011. The area currently, known as “*West el Balad*” (Arabic for center of the city) or Downtown Cairo, has seen and is still undergoing many successive phases of planning, construction, expansion and urban change. Its production is affected by the continuous political, social and economic changes in Cairo. Thus, the following review reads *Downtown Cairo's* urban history in relation to the multi-layered city of Cairo and the changes occurred on the level of the city, particularly the various modes of spatial production emerging through history and its implications of the urban history of Downtown Cairo.

4.1 The origins of Khedival Cairo (1868-1879)

Downtown Cairo is located on the east bank of the river Nile, next to the western side of the Medieval Islamic Cairo. It is the city center of Cairo and was first envisioned, during the second half of the 19th century by Khedive Ismail, who ruled Egypt from (1863-1879) (Bodenstein 2015; Al Kadi 2012). According to some narratives¹⁷, Khedive Ismail's French education and admiration to European cities influenced the modernization plane set in 1867, with reference to the European model, particularly Paris. Moreover, the construction of Khedival Cairo was not only inspired by the French architect Haussmann but also involved number of French engineers (among others) in the design process, together with the supervision of the Egyptian engineer Ali Pasha Mubarak .

The urban project of modern Cairo was gradual; *Azbakiyya*¹⁸, *Ismailiyya*¹⁹ and *Nasriyya* were the first Three quarters to be built, between 1868 till 1871 (Bodenstein 2015). The original plan was set to build a high-dense city with multi-story buildings, in addition to

¹⁷ See for example Abu Lughod, Janet, Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious (Princeton, NJ, 1971)

¹⁸ Formerly existed and was redeveloped and extended

¹⁹ Named after the Khedive Ismail (sometimes written “*Ismaileya*” quarter as in Galila El Kadi 2012)

integrating a master plan, in 1874 of building a new grid of streets that aimed at connecting the new quarters with the old Islamic ones, through modern transports (Fahmy 2005). Yet, due to economic challenges, a low-density area with suburban houses was built instead (Volait 2017; Bodenstein 2015). As for the master plan set by Ali Mubarak in 1874, it was never realized, only Mohamed Ali Boulevard and Muski street, which started in 1845, before Khedive Ismail's rule, was realized in 1875 (Fahmy 2005). Despite attributing the modernization of Cairo to Khedive Ismail's plan in 1867, pertaining to Paris as a model, Cairo's urban development was dictated by the bankruptcy of the Egyptian government in 1876 which led to the control of the *Caisse de la dette publique* on Egypt's funds (Fahmy 2005).

Thus, the urban form of these new quarters differed from its neighboring old Islamic quarter. While the latter exhibited the traditional irregular street networks that runs through its Fatimid architecture, the former was distinguished by a wide straight grid of streets, boulevards, arcades and French styled palaces with large open green spaces (Volait 2017; Alsayyad 2011). It was mainly a home for the ruling family, Egyptian elites and large number of foreigners. The area was comprised of a number of western-fashioned hotels, Cafes, bars, art galleries, cabarets and gardens. The cultural life buzzed with music concerts, art exhibitions and cultural salons (Volait 2015; El Kadi 2012).

4.2 The colonial city (1882-1940s)

During the turn of the 20th century the country started falling under the French and British control, Khedive Ismail was forced to resign and his son Khedive Tawfiq (r1879-1892) became the ruler of Egypt. This was associated with the major financial debts Egypt was facing which instigated the 'Urabi revolution of 1881-82. Accordingly, during the attempts to circumvent the revolt Egypt was invaded by the British occupation and lasted till 1954 (Raymond 2000 [1993]). This colonial time witnessed large scale developments and major expansions in the city. It had a significant impact on the transformation of the newly developed quarters, which was further extended; two more quarters were built. *Tawfiqiyya*, (named after the Khedive Tawfiq) and *Garden city* were built in 1904 by a private company (Bodenstein 2015) and later, between 1905 and 1907,

the Island of *Zamalek* was developed (Raymond 2000 [1993]). *Zamalek* became an attractive area for affluent foreigners (El Kadi 2012). Banks, book stores and office buildings found their place in Downtown. Apartment buildings replaced the suburban houses and many Palaces were replaced by public buildings (e.g. administrations and ministries) (El Kadi 2012), in addition to the construction of the Egyptian Museum in 1902 (Bodenstein 2015; Volait 2015).

Volait provides that the shaping of the city and the quest for a modernized Egypt had long been a tradition by its rulers since 1830s. For example, Large scale civil engineering projects (e.g. hydraulic infrastructure from the 1830s, the railway network project started in 1854, and the digging of the Suez Canal 1859-69), resulted not only in the establishment of local divisions of many European companies but also metal structures were locally produced by 1893 (Volait 2014). Thus, Egypt's road to modernization and westernization started long before the colonial time. It is thus important to elaborate that:

“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).

This aspect plays a significant role, particularly, in understanding how Downtown has long been used as a manifestation of a proud Egyptian history in literature (Naaman 2011) and heritage-making (Volait 2013), as will be discussed later.

El Kadi articulates various factors that instigated demographic changes and rise of urban challenges in Cairo. First, foreign investment increased during the British occupation which gave way for a process of densification, known as the ‘building boom’, according to Raymond it occurred between 1897-1907 (2000 [1993]). In addition, during the turn of the 20th Century and through the 1920s the population of Cairo increased dramatically, where it doubled in relation to the population growth of Egypt (Raymond 2000 [1993]); in 1917 Cairo had “791,000 inhabitants [...] out of a national population of 12,700,000” (El Kadi 2012, p.58). Furthermore, the construction of the low Aswan dam, in 1902,

enabled urban extensions on the river banks that used to be seasonally flooded. The construction of bridges to link both sides of the river and the establishment of various infrastructure projects (e.g. roads and public transport systems, water supply and sewage systems) accelerated the urbanization process (2012). Since 1902, most of the streets in the new quarters were prepared for automobiles (Raymond 2000 [1993]).

Thus, connecting Downtown with the rest of the city attracted various commercial and financial activities (e.g. insurance companies, banks ...etc.) towards *Ismailiyya* and embassies and consulates moved to the new district of *Garden city* and the islands of *Zamalek* and *Rwda* became affluent residences for the upper-class. Accordingly, these formerly suburb quarters were transformed into the dense and dynamic center of Cairo that had a cardinal economic and socio-political role (El Kadi 2012). Land value increased dramatically due to the high demand (Raymond 2000 [1993]). Simultaneously, a huge process of inner migration occurred, dwellers from the upper-middle class, upper class and the royal family took these newly developed quarters as their new residence. As Raymond explains this was the area where foreigners and Egyptian elites did their shopping, visited the cafes, joined sport clubs (e.g. Gezira sporting club²⁰) and even carried out their business (2000 [1993]).

4.2.1 The beginning of Nationalist urbanism in Downtown (1922-1930s)

During the World War I, British troops exhausted many resources in Egypt for the British army, which exacerbated the agitation towards the British occupation and led to the Revolution of 1919 against the British occupation, after which Egypt gained partial independence (El Kadi 2012). As such, by 1922, Egypt was on the quest for a national architecture that represents its independence. In the 1920s and through the 1930s, a nationalist movement aimed at countering the European dominance in both terms the architectural style and the profession of architecture, given that most of the buildings were built by European architects via imported building materials from Europe (Cairoobserver 2012). The aspiration for national identity through architectural representation created a mix of architectural styles that could be found everywhere in

²⁰ It was exclusive to foreigners till after World War II (Raymond 2000 [1993]).

Downtown from neo-Renaissance, Mamluk revivalism and Pharaonicism standing beside each other (Volait 2014). This pattern coincided with the creation of the first architectural journal in Egypt, *Al-Imara*²¹, which found modernism as a way to counter the domination of European Beaux-arts (Cairoobserver 2012). Thus architectural representation moved away from “*Local expressions of historicism*” towards modernism (Volait 2014). This coincided with a gradually growing number of middle class clients, which led to embracing a new architectural style (Cairoobserver 2012), such as, functionalism and other international styles provided by architects from Arab origins (Volait 2014). “*Egyptomania and Arab revivalist movements dried up towards the mid-1940s, and the modern school of architecture advocated and promoted by Al-Imara rose to prominence in urban and rural areas alike*” (El Kadi 2012, p. 184). This nationalist movement was not exclusive to architecture; it extended to art, literature and other cultural aspects of the Egyptian society.

4.2.2 A transitional phase in Downtown Cairo (1940s)

Since the provision of public services was governed by a subsection under the ministry of public work (called *Tanzim*)²², the city's management lacked coordination and was divided among various authorities. The privileges attained by foreign companies in the form of long term agreements for the provision of public services contributed to this lack of coordination. As Raymond explains, it was not before 1949, that Cairo acquired a municipal statues to manage public affairs and set building regulations (2000 [1993]), thus a comprehensive urban development plan for the whole city was not applicable before, nonetheless, these uncoordinated development trends were within a legal/formal frame. The main impact of such condition were mainly on the old districts, where it suffered slow decay and was almost completely degraded in 1947 (El Kadi 2012) due to the lack of maintenance.

²¹ The journal *Al-Imara*, was created in 1939 as the first architectural magazine in Arabic language edited by Egyptian architect Sayed Karim (Volait 2014)

²² *Tanzim* or *Majlis tanzim el Mahrusa* was founded since 1843 and fell under the ministry of public works in 1866. It was responsible for street planning, issuing building and renovation permits and implementing ordinance for public hygiene

In addition to the socio-spatial segregation and the decay of the old quarters that the city has witnessed, various urban crises emerged in the 1940s due to the decline of agricultural production that had started since 1914 and aggravated through the years, which left many peasants suffering economically. This caused major rural migration to the urban areas in Egypt, but mostly to Cairo. Rural migration reached its highest rate in 1947, which exacerbated the densification and challenges in the old affordable neighborhoods (Raymond 2000 [1993]; El Kadi 2012).

Meanwhile, the modern suburbs, became an aspiration for those who want to join the higher-classes (EL Kadi 2012), for example, according to El Kadi most of the military officers took *Abasseya* and *Heliopolis* as their new home, in 1947, seeking new modern urban districts and escaping from old overcrowded districts (e.g. *Hilmiya*, *Sayyida Zaynab* and *Abdin*) (2012). By the end of the decade, Downtown was fully densified and its architecture resembled “[...] *late-colonial nationalism and postcolonial pride and optimism*” (Ryzova 2013, para. 12). Nonetheless, this review is not to suggest that Cairo was a strictly divided city one for the élite and another for the poor, rather various milieus mixed and co-existed in their everyday life, through the history of Cairo particularly in Downtown (El Kadi and Elkerdani 2006).

4.2.3 Dynamics of different social groups in Downtown during the Monarchic time

Although the socio-spatial segregation of the city has been accompanied with the emergence of two types of *publics*, the foreigners and powerful elites of the modern city on one hand and the locals or as El Kadi refers to them “*the indigenous*” of the old city on the other hand, nonetheless, the social structure of the *publics* could not be strictly divided into these two categories, for even within the dominating public sphere of the foreigners- who represented only 2.5% of the total population of Cairo in 1947 (EL Kadi 2012) -, there were sub-spheres of French, British, Greeks and Italians, each had built various recreational and cultural venues for themselves that did not welcome “*ordinary*” Egyptians (Raymond 2000 [1993]) as well as other sub-spheres divided among foreign

workers (e.g. mechanics and maids) and other spheres for foreign intellectuals (diplomats, bankers and architects) (EL Kadi 2012). Sub-spheres emerged as well, among *effendis*²³ class, the traditional Egyptians and others for the poor and rural emigrants²⁴. Nonetheless, the synthesis, configuration and re-composition among these various *publics* (or *subaltern publics*) changed according to different social-spatial situations.

Moreover, urban spaces in Downtown Cairo were not exclusive for foreigners and the royal family. Downtown cohabited the royal palace of Abdin, the parliament, the ministries, as well as the headquarters of political and opposition parties, main newspapers and magazines, including nationalist clubs and intellectual organizations. In addition, villas of ministers, members of the court and heads of the nationalist party²⁵, coexisted along the same road. Other social groups located on the north and northeast of the center constituted rich agricultural farmers, merchants, modest entrepreneurs, schoolteachers and civil servants (EL Kadi 2012). Thus the urban space of Downtown played various roles in the social life of different *publics*.

As Ryzova argue, Downtown is considered as an attractive destination for the middle-class and other groups from the popular class to explore and enjoy a variety of cultural and entertainment venues exiting in Downtown, from window shopping, Cinemas and Cabarets to simply wandering in the street. As Ryzova states, “*While in many ways exclusive, Downtown was also always heterogeneous and predicated on drawing in publics from all over the city, even if temporarily*” (*ibid, para.9*). Namman shows that the coffee shops of Downtown are considered as a vital cultural venue for various *publics*. These venues played a crucial role as a contested space, where the upper-class, the *Effendiyya* (pl. of *Effendi*²⁶) - the modern anti-colonial nationalist groups- and other social groups negotiated Downtown Cairo's urban space as their own (2011). For

²³ *Effendi* was a term used to refer to a newly emerging class in this time; they were influenced by foreign education, often distinguished themselves as “modern” Egyptians as opposed to traditional Egyptians. They mostly adopted a different way of life represented in their costumes, social activities and “western manner” (Ryzova 2005; Naaman 2011)

²⁴ Even within rural immigrants, there were various social groups based on their place of origin (See: Naaman 2011).

²⁵ The *Wafd* nationalist party, was founded by Saad Zaghloul in 1918 and followed led the Revolution of 1919 against the British occupation, after which Egypt gained partial independence.

²⁶ Fn.32

example, while Café Riche, in Talaat Harb Street, is considered as an informal-institution for members of the Egyptian nationalist movement and leading leftist intellectuals and writers, Café Groppi, in Qasr an Nile street, on the other hand is famous for being a foreign patisserie that is frequented by the upper and middle classes (Naaman 2011).

4.3 The re-appropriation of Downtown by the socialist regime 1952-1960s.

Since the 1946 uprisings, the political unrest and agitation towards the British occupation grew stronger and culminated in the events of 1952. Scholars have controversial opinions on the events that took place on 26th July 1952. Some historians refer to it as a coup d'état undertaken by the *Free Officers*²⁷ and led by Gamal Abd el Nasser²⁸ (Alsayyad 2011) and others consider it a revolution (El Kadi 2012). Putting the political nature of the event aside, the result was a socio-political shift of Egypt from a monarchy into a republic. This moment marks the end of the *belle Epoque era*²⁹. This period left many Cairenes nostalgic about Khedivial Cairo that used to resemble a modern European city (Volait 2015).

These events came after a fire set by the uprisings on 25th of January 1952 in Downtown (Alsayyad 2011), which caused 463 buildings to burn (Volait 2015). In other estimates, according to El Kadi, around 711 commercial buildings burned during the fire in Downtown (El Kadi 2012). During this political shift new economic reforms were taken as part of the development plan set by the new government. This included the nationalization plan, started in 1961, which transformed the private ownership of many businesses and buildings in Downtown into state-owned entities. Accordingly, many foreigners and elites, who lived in Downtown, left the country. During this phase the socio-spatial landscape of Downtown changed significantly. As El Kadi puts it,

“[...] 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

²⁷ The *Free Officers* are a nationalist group of military officers that organized and led the coup in 26th July 1952

²⁸ Nasser is the second president of Egypt who served (1954-1970) after Mohamed Naguib, who served (1952-1954) and was the first leader of the 1952 coup/ revolution.

²⁹ The Khedivial and monarchic period of the 1850s till the 1950s. (Volait 2013)

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).

Pertaining to Downtown Cairo, two processes occurred, on the one hand, a process of adjusting rent regulations in Downtown started by reducing rents down till it was frozen in 1961 (El Kadi 2012), which gradually aggravated the degradation process of Downtown, where it blended with the dilapidated old Medieval/Islamic city (Volait 2015; El Kadi 2012; Raymond 2000 [1993]). On the other hand, despite the residential decline of Downtown, many administrative uses took the palaces as their location; with exception to the relocation of the seat of power to the suburb of *Heliopolis*. As such, Downtown has kept its role in manifesting the ideology of those in power.

In an attempt to manifest the new independent Egypt, features of Downtown were transformed in order to reflect the new ideologies of Nasser's regime. The name of *Ismailiyya* square was changed into *Tahrir*³⁰ (liberation) square (Alsayyad 2011). The former location of the British barracks was replaced by a number of administrative buildings for the new republic, such as, the Arab League and the Socialist Union, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the *Mugamma*³¹, a governmental complex, that represented the new bureaucratic system (Alsayyad 2012, El Kadi 2012). The former royal palace of *Abdin*, housed three ministries, in addition to the seat of the governorate of Cairo (El Kadi 2012).

Simultaneously, new cities (e.g Nasser City to the east and al-Mohandessin to the west) were developed. These new urban expansions attracted many upper-middle class dwellers from Downtown (Alsayyad 2011). As such, while the central areas in Cairo had lost 200,000 dwellers (El Kadi 2012), the inhabitants of Cairo's metropolitan area increased to 6.1 million, by 1965 (Alsayyad 2011). During the 1960s, the rate of population growth

³⁰ This name was already informally used since the revolution 1919 led by Saad Zaghloul, member of the opposition party during the Monarchic period (Saliba *et al* 2015).

³¹ Although its construction is commonly linked with the Socialist regime and is considered as an example of soviet architecture, yet, its construction started much earlier before 1952.

in Egypt was exacerbated by rural migration, of which, 80 percent was in Cairo (El Kadi 2012). This decade marked the peak of social-housing projects that started since the 1920s, aiming to absorb Cairo's growing population, which also reflect the socialist ideology of the new regime.

4.3.1 A phase of Stagnation and the emergence of “informal” housing in Cairo (1967-1973): a new mode of spatial production

A phase of stagnation in urban development lasted till the end of the Arab–Israeli War in 1974, “[...] and its effects lingered till the 1977 Camp David peace agreement” (Sims 2010, p.52). As a result, the continuously growing number of population in Cairo exceeded the abilities of the government to provide housing, city maintenance and public services. Thus, by 1976 informal/self-built settlements³² emerged within and on the peripheries of the city. According to Sims, this was possibly the only ongoing urban change occurring during the stagnation phase (2010). As for Downtown Cairo, the lack of maintenance of the public buildings and lack of capital caused by low rents contributed to the further deterioration of buildings in Downtown.

4.3.2 Social-spatial change during Nasser's time

Although the center of Cairo retained the main administrative functions -including many banks, insurance companies, trade unions, restaurants, coffee shops, Cinemas and Theaters...etc.-, nonetheless, the migration of intellectual elites away from the center, during the 1960s, resulted in profound demographic changes, to the extent that some scholars consider it a “*social decline*” (El Kadi 2012, p.92). The unprecedented access to free education and Nasser's aspiration to build an Egyptian “*industrial working class*” (Alsayyad 2011, p.244), had a profound impact on the Egyptian society.

³² According to Sims, already during the 1960s one of the earliest informal settlements appeared on agricultural land (e.g. al Munira al Gharbiya west of Kitkat) (Sims 2010). In addition as mentioned before in the previous section, self-built settlements in Egypt, particularly in rural areas has been a long tradition before 1960s. Perhaps the new aspect here is related to its arrival to Cairo and later on; its growth as one of the dominating a mods of spatial production.

Nonetheless, this period bears another side than the narrative of glorifying the working classes and the peasants. For example, through her analytical review on how Downtown is depicted in Egyptian novels, Naaman unveils the public life of a *ghurza* (hashish den), in the informal area of Ma'ruf³³, located on the northern west of Downtown, in 1960s, which reflects the challenges faced by many rural migrants, who moved to Cairo seeking better living conditions and job opportunities (Naaman 2011). Since Downtown played a cardinal role in the life of the poor population, in the surrounding areas, both as a place for job opportunities and recreational activities, during the 1940s and 1950s, rural migration was mostly intense in the areas adjacent to Downtown. Immigrants from the same place of origins in Egypt usually choose to settle in the same neighborhood. Since the district of Ma'ruf has been a place for upper Egyptian migrants, accordingly, many Nubians including other upper Egyptian migrants moved to the area of Ma'ruf (Abu-Lughod in Naaman 2011). The area of Ma'ruf is an area adjacent to Khedival Cairo, and was planned to be part of the Khedive Ismail's plan in 1869, where a promenade along the Nile was to be built for pedestrians, named "*La Rue Wabur al-Miyah*", yet it was never realized (J.L. Arnaud in Naaman 2011).

Originally, it constituted a number of villas and municipal buildings. As rural migration to Cairo started to increase, the historical dilapidated area of Ma'ruf was gradually re-appropriated by the migrants and became an informal area and a vital shopping center for the poor (Naaman 2011). As Naaman argues the depiction of this counter-culture is not only reflected by the sanctioned activities in the *ghurza* (hashish den), but the fact that since its degradation, Ma'ruf is considered as a historical ruin area to be demolished and thus its residents are denoted as "illegal". The proximity of several poor districts to downtown, among which Ma'ruf meant that Downtown was no longer dominated by the Bourgeoisie; rather, residents from poorer neighbourhoods became frequent visitors (Alsayyad 2011). Thus, this slow demographic change resulted in the emergence of different type of shops, cafes and cultural venues in Downtown that was catered for this new social group (El Kadi 2012; Naaman 2011).

³³ The Area of Ma'ruf is located on the western fringes of Downtown and south of the popular areas of Rud al-Fraraj and Bulaq. Mainly inhabited by upper Egyptian migrants (Naaman 2011)

Meanwhile, the emergence of informal urban practices found its way to Downtown, the transformation of residential flats into offices, the informal occupation of the passages and paths between the buildings became some of the common practices in Downtown, in addition to taking the former food storage rooftop cabins (the building's terrace) as a residence by the poor (El Kadi 2012); later referred to as the "*terrace society*"³⁴. Informal/unsanctioned urban trends became a parallel pattern that co-existed with licensed development trends in Downtown. This process is best described by Bayat's "silent encroachment" (Bayat 2010).

4.4 Economic reforms post-1973: From socialist to capitalist regime

After the death of President Nasser in 1970, president Anwar el-Sadat³⁵ came to power. By the mid-1970s, after the 1973-war, Sadat adopted a new economic reform plan, a liberalization policy known as *Infitah* (literal translation: the opening) (Alsayyad 2011; Sims 2010). Sadat's aim was to transform Egypt's economy into market economy and establish new international relations in order to cope with the changing global economy at that time. Internally, this meant adopting decentralization policies, establishing foreign trade regulations in order to invite foreign investment and international aids to Egypt, as well as fostering the growth of the private sector (Alsayyad 2011).

During this phase, Cairo's urban transformation has taken many facets, mainly influenced by two factors. On one hand, the adoption of decentralization and liberalization policies opened the way for the private sector to invest in urban development projects that were profit oriented. This resulted in a major building boom, nonetheless, due to the dramatic escalation of land value and property and real estate speculation most of the newly built unites were not affordable and remained vacant (El Kadi 2012; Alsayyad 2011). On the

³⁴ "*terrace society*" was first coined by Alaa Al Aswany in his novel the *Yacoubian Building*, to refer to renting or squatting the rooftops of old building by the poor (Naaman 2011). This practice however, is not exclusive to Downtown Cairo and has been widely increasing through the 1960s and 1970s till today.

³⁵ The third president of Egypt; served from 1970 till his assassination in 1981

other hand, the government's withdrawal from the former socialist urban project (e.g. provision of low-income public housing) and its declined role in the provision of public services, forced the urban poor to seek alternative solutions, which resulted in a galloping production of various forms of informal/unofficial housing in the City (El Kadi 2012, p.98). Self-built housing took many forms, either on squatted state-owned land (agricultural land or on the peripheries of the city), or dwelling in the cemeteries (known as *the city of the dead*), or by the densification of deteriorated neighbourhoods (Alsayyad 2011; Sims 2010; Raymond 2000 [1993]).

Parallely, the government of Sadat sought to focus on the Tourism sector as one of the main sources for economic growth, given the absence of oil and large industries. Global integration and marketing strategies were concomitant processes to the tourism. Since the seat of power during the Sadat's regime was moved from Heliopolis to Giza, much attention was paid to the west bank of the Nile, which gave rise to a "*secondary center*" (Al Kadi 2012, p.100) attracting various international companies and banks that moved away from Downtown to districts such as Dokki, Giza and Mohandessin (ibid). Meanwhile, the Center of the east bank of the Nile (Khedival Cairo) continued its degradation, yet, it still maintained most of the administrative activities. Al Kadi describes it:

"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" (Al Kadi 2012, p.95).

4.4.1 The rise of bohemian culture in Downtown Cairo (1970s-80s)

From this moment on till the new Heritage conservation plans that started around 1996 (Volait 2013; El Kadi and Elkerdani 2006), government interventions and real estate development projects were hardly, if at all, present in Downtown. Thus, most of the changes in Downtown that occurred to the built environment - although highly influenced by market forces and other development policies- were mainly undertaken by individuals, shop owners, residents and other non-governmental actors. This however, does not suggest that governmental presence in Downtown disappeared. The features of

Downtown during the 1970s reflected the new Infitah policy. It remained an important shopping area and an entertainment site for very different social groups. Towards the 1980s and the emergence of American style shopping malls in other neighbourhoods in Cairo, Downtown slowly became known for its black markets (e.g. in Shawarbi Street) for smuggled goods from cities that became a free-trade zone (e.g. Port Said) during the Infitah (Ryzova 2013). Through the 1970s and 1980s, Downtown became also famous by its Baladi bars³⁶ (traditional bar) that are licensed to serve alcoholic drinks and caters for a popular class and tourists. Thus, visiting Downtown acquired a certain social connotation- as Ryzova call it a “*suspect*”- for not abiding by ‘normative’ social standards (Ryzova 2013). Beside the shopping and entertainment activities, as it gradually lost both its upper-class residents and visitors and its conventional status as elegant site, Downtown has become an important venue for a certain type of social group that added to the complex social mix of the area since late 1960s till 1990s. As Ryzova depicts,

“[Downtown] gradually 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, para. 15)

As Ryzova further details, these social groups reflect “*the nexus of bohemia, political dissent and transgressive non-hegemonic behaviour*” (*ibid*). This trend became an informal establishment in Downtown; different *publics* took the coffee shops of Downtown as a *venue for public-making*³⁷. Thus Downtown was on the threshold of producing a counter-normative generation. This trend has grown strong to the extent that

³⁶ Baladi bars in Downtown have made an online network that provides information about male dominated versus female friendly bars.

³⁷ This aspect finds affinity with Iveson's forms of public-making, as will be discussed later.

Downtown became "*hegemonically heterotopic*" (Ryzova 2013). The quality of being different, alternative or "*heterotopic*" was sought by those groups who frequented Downtown. Thus, they were considered as counter-publics. Despite being attributed to Downtown, practicing *counter-public actions* has long been a tradition in Cairo, especially in poor neighbourhoods. For example, in male dominated coffee-shop (called: 'Ahwa), referring back to the case of the *ghurza* (hashish den), in the informal area of Ma'ruf, Naaman argues that *Khayri Shalabi's* novel *Salih Hisa*, 2000, shows "[t]he role of the café or in this case the hashish house, as a site of negotiating between modern and traditional/rural forms of pleasure. [The *ghurza* was a space of] counter-modernity in juxtaposition to the "staged" modernity to the nearby downtown" (Naaman 2011, p.161). Although different in its type of *publics*, the coffee shops frequented by Ryzova's heterotopic group could be considered as an intellectual version of the counter-publics *who visited the ghurza*, in Ma'ruf.

4.5 End of the Twentieth century (1980-1990s)

After the assassination of Sadat in 1981, Mubarak came to power. His government has put forward a new master plan for Cairo, in 1983, which focused its efforts on extending towards the east of Cairo. Given that the seat of power had returned to Heliopolis, it became an incentive to focus on this area (Al Kadi 2012). Even though a new master plan was established in 1983, it was mainly concerned with development projects on the regional level and its connection to the eastern side of Cairo and the desert development, mainly dominated by the private sector (Al Kadi 2012). Tourism development, particularly Pharonic Egypt, continued gaining much attention by the new government under Hosni Mubarak. Since the mid-1980s, urban development trends were mainly dominated by global competition to attract both tourists and upper-class consumers (Alsayyad 2011; Kuppinger 2005). This meant rapid urbanization, further land and property speculation and deterioration to the existing districts of the center of Cairo.

On the economic level, as Mitchell explicates, since the economic crisis³⁸, in 1990 Egypt was forced to adopt various economic adjustment policies among which IMF stabilization plan. Despite the original plan that aimed at enhancing the agricultural sector and increase the level of exports, Egypt channeled its acquired capital in the investment of ring roads and other infrastructure projects. This was accompanied by a process where real estate developers purchased cheap land subsidized by the government and provided with basic infrastructure. As a result, the real estate sector, mainly dominated by a small segment of government officials and upper-class entrepreneurs, became the largest non-oil sector, given that tourism industry involved a great deal of construction projects. In addition, the construction of massive projects of apartment buildings to house the military elites made the Egyptian army one of the largest contractors in Egypt³⁹.

This meant that neoliberalism redirected public funds to the benefit of certain groups that monopolized the construction sector, among other sectors (Mitchell 1999). Since, privatization, globalization and neoliberalism became the dominating forces for urban development; the city has seen an unprecedented economic growth, especially due to construction activities. This has exacerbated socio-spatial inequalities of the City (Alsayyad 2011; Mitchell 1999). Since then Cairo has become in an ongoing process of *“demolition / reconstruction / densification”* (Al Kadi 2012)

The increase of inequality, as a consequence of neoliberal urbanism, meant a dire need of aid, which gave rise to many NGOs, who worked tirelessly on poverty alleviation and provided various social services to the urban poor. Yet, neoliberalism in Cairo and most Middle Eastern cities meant the restriction of any collective mobilization that could jeopardize economic-political powers. The same applies for NGOs and the civil society, who suffered a great deal of surveillance obliterating their activities (Bayat 2010).

According to Mitchell: *“Neoliberalism 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). Unless they are subsumed by the prevailing economic-political powers and work in their favor, in that

³⁸ A detailed account on the events that led to the financial crisis on 1990 is provided by Mitchell 1999.

³⁹ This trend is exacerbated in the prevailing development projects after the revolution in 2011.

case their agenda is compromised. In addition, few of the NGOs had their internal issues- paternalism and administrative inadequacy. This was accompanied by control over state-designated public spaces. Accompanied by the fear of the rising religious fundamentalism, public gatherings were restricted- particularly in touristic sites such as the protected heritage sites of the old district of Cairo. Later, it was culminated by issuing a state of emergency law in 1981, prohibiting the gathering of any group of individuals in a public square (El Sheshtawy 2006). This complicated affair meant that subaltern groups are left with one alternative- “*taking matters into their own hand*” (Bayat 2010). Accordingly, informal urbanism continued to grow, given the socio-spatial disparities and the need for affordable housing.

4.5.1 Cairo's belle Époque: a process of heritage-making in Downtown

In the midst of these consecutive urban development patterns in Cairo and its implications, a re-born image of *Khedival Cairo* as a representative of the “Cairo's belle Époque” era, drew the attention of various governmental bodies and institutions including the private sector, where efforts began to plan and call for the conservation of *Khedival Cairo*, the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century buildings and sites, after being forgotten for several years (El Kadi and Elkerdani 2006).

Heritage conservation is mainly managed by the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), which was affiliated with the Ministry of Culture till 2011, and then it became an independent Ministry (TADAMUN, 2019b). As such, it is considered as the sovereign body in Heritage conservation. Previously, the historic periods recognized as heritage and worthy of preservation by the SCA were the prehistoric sites, Pharonic, Arab epoch, Coptic and Islamic monuments. In light of the renewed interest in Khedival Cairo, the SCA expanded its responsibilities to comprise the newly “*invented tradition*” (Volait 2013) of Cairo's belle Époque (El Kadi and Elkerdani 2006).

Despite its seemingly discordant nature from a post-colonial perspective- as part of colonial architecture-most of the buildings were commissioned by Egyptian upper-classes and the royalty, who embraces these European styles, that later spread among the middle-class. In addition, unlike Algeria and Morocco, in Egypt, colonial areas were not enclaves

in isolation from the local citizens (El Kadi and Elkerdani 2006); rather, anti-colonialists and members from the opposition and nationalist parties shared the space of Downtown with the foreigners and the Royal family. Hence, this enabled the heritage campaign, to convey Cairo's belle époque as a national-heritage. As Volait argues, the endorsing of colonial architecture as part of national heritage is not exclusive to Egypt and could be considered as part of a global phenomenon, as seen in *fin de siècle Istanbul* in Turkey and efforts by the Moroccan NGO Casamemoire to preserve *colonial Casablanca* (Volait 2013). It is an attempt to remember Cairo's past, not only by the commonly attributed "Islamic," or "Fatimid"⁴⁰ heritage but also by the "Belle-Epoque" one (Volait 2013), which represents Egypt's modern history. It is a result of "[...] *seemingly unrelated initiatives that coincided to produce "self-evident heritage value"*"⁴¹ (Volait 2013, p.3). Aside from the key factor that triggered this new interest in Khedival Cairo, the result was a series of events that finally led to launching a National campaign in 1997; "National campaign for the preservation of architectural and technical heritage of modern Egypt" "by the newspaper *Al-Ahram Weekly* under a request from the first lady and supported by the President. The aim was to initiate a national project supported by various actors including several ministries and the private sector to supervise the process of safeguarding modern architecture the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century in Egypt (Volait 2013).

4.5.1.1 Putting Downtown on Cairo's cultural heritage map

On the level of the Public sphere, the assemblage of various cultural constructs around the 1989 such as "Belle Époque"⁴², "Paris along the Nile" and "Golden Years" counts for triggering a colonial nostalgia (Volait 2013; Abaza 2011)⁴³.

⁴⁰ Has been on the World Heritage List since 1979 (Volait 2013)

⁴¹ Volait referring to an approach pioneered by André Chastel and Jean-Pierre Babelon that observes how temporalities intertwine and result in the recognition of a cultural heritage (Volait 2013).

⁴² This term (Egypt's Belle Époque) first emerged in the publication of Egypt's Belle Époque: Cairo 1869-1952, a compilation of stories gathered over a few years by the British journalist Trevor Mostyn in 1989 (Volait 2013).

⁴³ Such as: *Samir W. Rafaat (2003) Cairo, the Glory Years: Who Built What, When, Why and for Whom...* and *Cynthia myntti (1999) Paris Along the Nile: Architecture in Cairo from the Belle Époque. AUC press.*

These cultural constructs were fostered by various groups and channeled among a diverse range of venues. To mention a few, Media through TV series and films, galleries and cultural events about the diversity of the arts in this era, Literati who wrote about the social life before Nasser regime, for example the often cited bestseller novel by Alaa Al Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building* published 2004, among others, which generated a sense of nostalgia and a renewed interest in the area (Abza 2011) and publicists who create websites that display various pictures and stories celebrating the old monarchic time, in addition to academic conference about the architecture and technical value of site such as Downtown and Heliopolis (Volait 2013; El Kadi and Elkerdani 2006, Abaza 2011).

“The ‘Belle Époque’ phenomenon had continued developing in the 2000s. Its institutionalization has been consolidated, as has its economic appeal and its commodification.” (Volait 2013, p. 16)

On the Level of the government, this process resulted in issuing various decrees and amending the law⁴⁴ to prohibit the demolition of any building that passes a period of hundred years and is considered to be of an archeological, artistic or historical value (Volait 2013; El Kadi and Elkerdani 2006). Between 1996 and 1998, various governmental entities such as the Historic buildings authority under the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), the Committee for Safeguarding of Architectural Heritage under the department of housing and infrastructure, and the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP)⁴⁵, have exerted efforts and commissions for the inventory of historical buildings in Cairo based on different criteria (El Kadi and Elkerdani 2006).

⁴⁴ For detailed statement of the Law and its content, see (Volait 2013 or El Kadi and Elkerdani 2006)

A plan to pedestrianize several streets in Downtown Cairo was set. In 1997, the first pilot project initiated was in the area of Imad al Din Street⁴⁶ (total of 23, 000 square meters). This project was concerned with paving over the streets, installing urban furniture and painting over the facades of the buildings, including some infrastructure renovation work (e.g. in Saray el Azbakeya Street), given the deterioration this area faced. As mentioned before, Imad al Din Street was a vibrant street in the 1920s-1940s and buzzed with night life (Ryzova 2013; El Kadi 2012). A second pilot project followed in 1999. Despite these efforts, in reality, the approach taken by the government has met many critics by journalists and academics alike, as will be discussed later. According to an article in the online newspaper, Egypt Independent: "*Emad Eddin*⁴⁷ is now [in 2011] a quiet, dimly-lit street with a small number of stores on each side. But up above loom buildings still gloriously displaying the sophisticated Khedivial styles of the 1930s and 1940s" (Helmy 2011, para 10).

On the level of the Private sector, various examples in Downtown and Heliopolis, show how governmental bodies and private owners sought to enlist the heritage status of their property in order to solve ownership disputes in their benefit, or, in the case of the government, to protect "*presidential buildings*" that interests the ruling class, yet, rendered as 'national Heritage for all Egyptians'. As such, "*the reevaluation of "Belle Époque" architecture in Egypt can be fueled by real-estate motivations*" (2013, p.13). Aligned with the same pattern, around the late 1990s in Downtown, a new art scene of globalized public sphere emerged, as a result a number of private elite art galleries spread in Downtown.(Ryzova 2013; Abaza 2011).

4.5.2 The Downtown bohemia through the 1980s-90s

As mentioned before, bohemian life found its way in Downtown since the 1970s. This pattern continued through the 1980s and intensified to create what is informally known as

⁴⁶ In the 1920s, and 1930s, Cabarets and cinemas along Emad El-Din Street, were frequented by a variety of audiences, including provincial youth, middling youth, efendi student, came to stroll and enjoy the main entertainment area in the City (Ryzova 2013).

⁴⁷ different transliteration for *Imad al Din*

“*muthallath al-ru'b* (triangle of horror)⁴⁸ (Ryzova 2013) (Figure 1). Jacquemond mapped the area surrounding Talaat Harb Square- a triangular area shaped by “*Cairo Atelier, Le Grillion and Zahrat al-Bustan café*”(2008, p.175)- revealing a number of coffee shops that houses the bohemian life of alternative groups in Downtown Cairo. The use of the term implies the dominance of a “[...] *non-hegemonic space of alternative, oppositional cultural production* (Ryzova 2013, para. 17)”, whereby literati, artists and poets that belong to the prevailing regime are not welcomed.

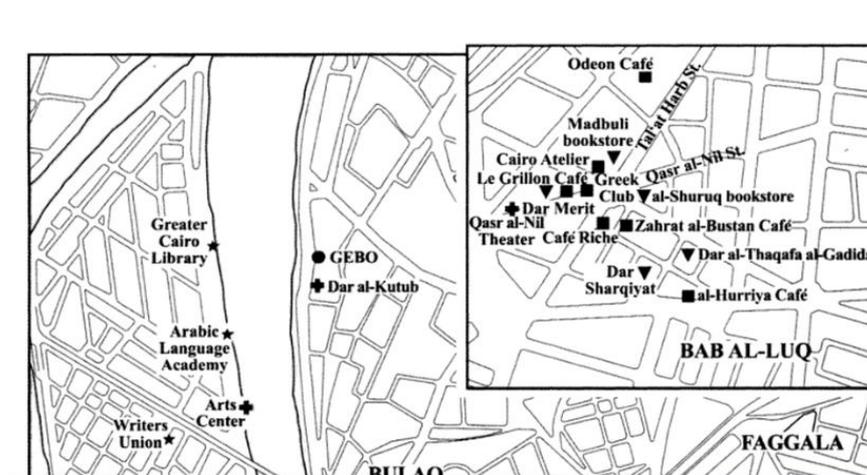


Figure 1: “*muthallath alru'b*” (triangle of horror) in Downtown Cairo

Source: Term coined by the writer Sonallah Ibrahim, figure retrieved from Jacquemond 2008

Downtown has become an established institution for not only writes but other individuals belonging to the fields of cultural production (artists, musicians, poets, photographers, film makers...etc.). It has, paradoxically, become the main venue for counter- cultural production, and at the same time, the place of *Belle-Époque*, where new transnational art and cultural venues are popping up.

⁴⁸ Coined by the writer Sonallah Ibrahim (Jacquemond 2008). The term denotes the unwelcomeness that might be felt by the regime's supporter at that time.

4.6 The 21st century: urban regeneration strategy for Khedivial Cairo

4.6.1 Downtown as part of a Cairo 2050-vision

By the beginning of the twenty first century, the government initiated a new vision for Cairo and 'Cairo 2050'⁴⁹ was born in 2007. It was a result of the collaboration between the GOPP, UNDP/UN-Habitat, the World Bank, the GTZ (currently known as GIZ), and Japanese foreign aid agency JICA, and supported by the son of Egypt's President at the time (TADAMUN 2014). Part of this new vision incorporated the integration of the ongoing regeneration efforts of Downtown Cairo that had already started in the 1990s. This was consolidated by setting the guidelines of a new urban regeneration strategy in Downtown till 2020, in 2006 (Al Kadi 2012)

Cairo 2050 vision was a highly criticized plan, since, attracting more investment was a dominating part of the plan, in order to join the global competition of major cities. As Al Kadi puts it, "*In this way, public authorities hope to create a competitive centre that can catch up with other regional cities such as Beirut, Dubai or Doha*" (2012, p.256). As a result a joined interest by the private sector emerged, the real-estate private company *Al Ismaelia For Real Estate Investment* (will be referred to as: *Al Ismaelia Company*), owned by Egyptian and Saudi entrepreneurs, born in 2008.

4.7 The Egyptian revolution in 2011

Although it has been almost a decade since the 2011-revolution, nonetheless, the implications of this political event on the history of Downtown and Cairo in general, are still being written and re-written. Events that took place in 25th of January 2011, which

⁴⁹ See <https://cairofrombelow.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/cairo-2050-vision-v-2009-gopp-12-mb.pdf>, Retrieved from *Cairo From Below* on 20th of June 2019.

was preceded by various protests, movements and strikes such as: the *Kefaya* movement⁵⁰ (means: *enough*) (Ibrahim 2014), the 6th of April movement⁵¹ established in 2008 (El Kadi 2014) and “*We are All Khaled Said*” Facebook page, 2010 coupled with the Alexandria rally⁵². These events culminated by the revolution of 2011, which is controversially attributed to a “*young internet and Facebook generation*” (Abaza 2013, p. 1084), in order to demand freedom and social justice and escalated to overthrowing the Mubarak regime. The debates about the historical and political factors that led to the revolution of 2011 are beyond the scope of this research, nonetheless, it suffices to say that the long process of seeking social justice, and freedom of expression including non-corrupted government, not to mention the adoption of neoliberal and “*laissez faire*” policies that worsened the urban challenge in Egypt, as previously discussed in this chapter, played a significant role, leading to the Egyptian revolution in 2011 (Ibrahim 2014). During the uprising, urban space particularly main squares in various Egyptian cities played a key role in these political events, among them the area of Downtown, particularly, Tahrir Square and the main streets connected to it, e.g. Mohammed Mahmud Street⁵³. As such, a wide range of discussions regarding the interplays of these political events were initiated.

Attention has been also paid to both the ways public space has been used, reclaimed and transformed and the broader context of the urban dimension of the revolution. In light of the renewed international attention to public space in Arab cities, right after the “Arab Spring”,⁵⁴ academic research was focused on documenting and offering numerous readings on both the emerging forms of resistance and confrontations between the state

⁵⁰ Kefaya movement was founded in 2004, as a counter-movement to Mubarak's regime and attempts to transfer his presidency directly to his son after decades of a regime that has led to economic and political stagnation. This movement inspired various cycles of protests from 2004 till 2006.

⁵¹ Established in 2008 by a group of activists on Facebook, in order to support textile workers to protest low wages

⁵² Both the Facebook page and the rally were an act of protesting against police violence after the torture of Khaled Said, a young Egyptian, which led to his death

⁵³ Now informally known as *sharei' uyuun al-hurriyyah* (the Street of the Eyes of Freedom) (Abaza 2013, p.128)

⁵⁴ A description that was constructed by western and global media (Stadnicki, Vignal and Barthel 2014), yet met with skepticism, given its generalizing tendencies

and the revolutionaries, and the type of urban space produced by these practices; denoted as “*localized war zones*” (Abaza 2013) “*Spaces/squares of change and anger*” (El Kadi 2014) or the “*free people's republic of Tahrir*” (Elshahed 2011).

Such confrontations were resembled in the way the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) enclosed the area surrounding the Tahrir Square with walls in order to control the demonstrations, which then was filled with Graffiti as a form of resistance. Another aspect is the occupation of the square by the protestors with tents and camps, gathering various social groups and classes, who would not co-exist under different circumstances (El Kadi 2014; El Shahed 2011), and the formation of a new alliance between the revolutionaries and the Army, which was physically manifested by the Army's protection of the protesting zones and surrounding Tahrir square with check points (Elshahed 2011).

In addition, the absence of state control during this time, gradually led to the rise of a “*new public culture of protest*” (Abaza 2013, p.126), manifested in multifaceted forms, including but not limited to the emergence of temporary artistic urban activities (e.g. art and music performances, graffiti...etc.), fostered by its integration with social media and online networks, and accompanied by the “*encroachment*” (Bayat 2010) of popular street cafés and street vendors to the protesting areas.

Thus, the co-production of this temporal urban space by various factions of the revolutionaries (e.g. young upper-class activists, Islamists and the *sha'bi*/popular class...etc.), during the sit-in period⁵⁵ and shortly after in Tahrir Square, resembled a significant moment and invited various readings by many scholars that shared a common denominator marked by the remarkable restructuring of power-relationships between the state and the people and manifested in the physical public square (Berger M.J. 2014; El Kadi 2014; Abaza 2013; Dana 2013; Alsayyad 2011; Elshahed 2011; Sánchez García 2011). Various cafes and hidden alleyways in Downtown became a refuge for the revolutionaries, a place for subterranean and maneuvering practices that supported the revolutionaries, by providing resources (e.g. food and other supplies).

⁵⁵ First eighteen days that led to the resignation of Mubarak

The integration of social media and online networks in this process raised many questions concerning the amalgamation between the real and the virtual public space, in the context of social movements which led to dubbing it as the '*Facebook revolution*' (Smith, C. 2011). The empowerment of the *publics* in Tahrir square -that was fostered by the social media and the constant flow of information- readjusted the power dynamics between the people and the state (Abaza 2014). These '*insurgent networks*' played a vital role in keeping the urban social movement not only connected on the level of the city, but also globally connected, inspiring each other. Even when the government cut off the internet connection people turned to alternative modes of communication and combined it with social media (e.g. The combination between land lines and the "Speak2Tweet" initiative launched by Google) (AlSayyad and Guvenc 2015) allowing Egyptians to communicate and provide updates on the demonstrations.

The expansion of street vendors and popular street cafes all over the area of Tahrir transformed the features of the square. Despite being an established practice in Egypt long before 2011, yet as Abaza argues it has been more present and visible than before. One of the main attributes of the revolution is experiencing a "*sense of solidarity*" (Elshahed 2011) that brought all sorts of social subjects; gender, class, cultural and religious backgrounds, together. Thus, all contradictions and difference seemed to fade for a moment (El Kadi 2014).

4.8 Downtown Cairo post-2011

4.8.1 The 'revolution effect' and the rise of urban initiatives

Given the long absence of local authorities and lack of citizen participation in the decision making process, many Egyptians were encouraged by the enthusiasm instigated during the events of 2011 and the hope for change. The occurrences during the time of the revolution, in terms of the spontaneous collective actions, inspired other initiatives to act on long term projects (Ibrahim 2014).

On the political level, new initiatives encouraged the participation in political discourses in both, formal and informal political spheres. Between the years 2011 and 2013, various political sphere could freely engage in political discourses due to the relative absence of the state (Badr 2016). This however was shortly lived and was restricted by the new *military regime* as will be elaborated later (Abaza 2017). Thus, according to Badr, in this period, the political milieu has witnessed political pluralism that declined during the Mubarak time. It nurtured the practice of new political culture that is closely linked to online media (2016). Similarly, on the level of urban activism, significant increase of various urban initiatives concerned with urban issues in the city, after 2011 (Stadnicki 2014), could be observed not only in Cairo but across a number of Egyptian cities such as Alexandria, Port Said and Mansura (Abaza 2017; Ibrahim 2014), where local residents resorted to self-organized urban interventions (Stadnicki 2014). Thus, not only were new initiatives created but also other existing self-help urban practices intensified.

Beside these community-led initiatives, a wide range of urban activists- from “[...] *urban professionals (architects, urban planners, students) who often hold several positions (universities, consulting firms, media); [to], politicized activists who regard urban issues as a cause of indignation and protest, but who are not urban planners or specialists by profession*” (Stadnicki 2015, para.2) emerged in Downtown Cairo (Map 1). They employed various forms of urban activism, either to articulate their dissent, to open dialogues on various urban issues, to give voices to subaltern groups, to seize potentiality for cultural and artistic production or to invite citizens to engage in the process of spatial production.



Map 1: map of Downtown Cairo revealing all the initiatives popped up since 2011

Source: Initiatives' establishment dates from CUIP (CLUSTER 2015), Base map from (El-Kadi 2012), prepared and charted by author

The previous map shows all the independent initiatives that popped up after 2011 in Downtown Cairo. In the online Platform initiated by CLUSTER, various initiatives could be found by name, type of activity and location in Cairo. Based on this inventory the researcher detected the date of establishment registered by each initiative and thus they were laid out and gathered on the above shown map in order to show the scale by which Downtown have become the location for newly emerging active groups.

Various pro-revolution young journalists initiated online platforms to share and provide alternative readings to the current dynamics of Cairo after the uprising; independent from the state led media (Stadnicki 2015; Abaza 2014; Ibrahim 2014) , such as Mada Masr, an anti-mainstream online newspaper founded in 2013, which is concerned with reporting the contemporary cultural and political dynamics of Cairo, post-2011. *Egyptian Streets*

another online news media that was founded in 2012, focused on promoting human rights , drawing the public's attentions to issues in the Egyptian street with a certain focus on supporting grass-root movements that work on women and environmental rights⁵⁶. A more architecture-oriented online media is *Cairoobserver*, which shares publications from architects, activists, historians and residents engaging in discourses on the contemporary city of Cairo in relation to its urban history and finding ways to improve the built-environment. A similar platform is *Cairo from Below*, an international blog aimed at opening a dialogue among planners, architects and activists about the urban future of Cairo and exploring alternative planning approaches. *Mantiqti*, founded 2011, is an example of a hyper-local newspaper that focuses on giving the local community a voice and work one providing investigative articles about local issues from various perspectives.

Other action-oriented initiatives that are concerned with urban issues such as *Tadamun* (means *solidarity*) initiative, in contribution with *Takween* Integrated Community Development (in Cairo) and the American University in Washington, D.C., (Golia 2015) are focused on achieving social justice in the city. They carry many activities among which providing detailed information to all Egyptians about the various governmental bodies and authorities involved in the decision making process, in terms of urban development in Cairo, as well as updated publications on urban debates, current development projects and its impact on the community, the adopted development policies and laws. *Madd* (means *flow*) platform created by a group of architects and urban designers who work as community consultants in marginalized and deprived areas, in order to mediate between the local residents, the government and private investors in envision alternative solutions in areas that face the threat of evictions such as *Maspero triangle* (informal settlement on the Nile) in the center of Cairo (Berger M.J. 2014).

CLUSTER (Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research), founded in 2011 by architect Omar Nagati and American artist Beth Stryker, is one of the leading initiatives that are concerned with urban policy change. Megawra, the Built Environment Collective, established in 2011, is an architectural hub that provides a space

⁵⁶ See: <https://egyptianstreets.com/egyptianstreets/>

for architects, planners, students and activists to focus on art, theory, praxis and cultural heritage and its role in promoting sustainability and social responsibility in the built environment.

On another level, art and cultural initiatives- film, music, theater, dance performance, visual art and photography, could be considered as one of the main outcomes of the revolution (Abaza 2013). For example Mahatat (Means *stations*) for contemporary Art initiative, which is concerned with community art projects in public space, carried out two artistic interventions⁵⁷ in Lazoughli square in the Mounira neighbourhood east of the Nile and Soliman Gohar Square west of the Nile as part of their large scale project *Shaware3na* (our streets), where they document community interaction with various art installations, art activities and public screening in public space (Thews and Said 2014), In addition to monthly festivals such as, *Al-Fann Midan*.

Several independent cinemas, such as *Zawya*, an independent alternative cinema that focuses on alternative films, documentaries and experimental work from all over the world, was founded in 2014, in Downtown, *Cimatheque* which was established after the revolution in 2011.

4.8.2 Regained control of the state and resuming urban regeneration plans

Almost two years after the revolution, the state regained its control over the public spaces. Soon they started evicting the street vendors who filled the public space in Downtown during the revolution. Street art activities were slowly being restricted and a protest law was issued in 2013⁵⁸ allowing the state to ban and erupt any public protest. Coinciding with the “war on terror”- on the regional level from ISIS and on the national level from the Muslim Brotherhood, especially after the overthrow of Morsi- which was

⁵⁷ For more details about the project see “*Temporary Artistic Uses of Public Space: Two Less Famous Squares in Cairo*” part 1 and 2 at: <https://www.aminachaudri.ch/2014/02/27/temporary-artistic-uses-of-public-space-two-less-famous-squares-in-cairo-part-1/>

⁵⁸ This new law is an new version of the old assembly law set in 1914, which prohibits people gathering in public space (Nagati and Stryker 2016)

coupled with the state of unrest that directly affects tourism and foreign investments⁵⁹ in the country and in turn devastating economic conditions, this created a strong alibi for the new regime to exercise heavy militarization and securitization measures (Abaza 2017).

This coercive strategy was marked by cultural policy that prohibited the use of public space for independent cultural activities. Graffiti was seen as a provoking act and therefore criminalized by the authorities. *Al Fann Midan* festival (previously mentioned) struggled to survive for three years till it was shut down in the summer of 2014 by the government.

4.8.2.1 Debates on neoliberal agenda to gentrify Downtown

The government resumed with the restoration plans of Belle Époque Downtown that had started few years before, as part of the Cairo-2050 vision set in 2008. The renovation of the building facades and the pedestrianization⁶⁰ of large square and streets were coupled with a government campaign that embarked on shutting down the streets popular cafes (e.g. Sherifein Street) (Abaza 2017). According to Abaza the campaign of the new regime is portraying a certain picture of Downtown, one that is renovated, appealing to the private investors and free from popular street cafes and street vendors (2017).

On the level of the private sector *Al Ismaelia for real estate investment* continues to purchase buildings⁶¹ in Downtown for their refurbishment and put them back in the market for rent. Parallel to this process, Al Ismaelia Company has been promoting and financially supporting many of the alternative art and cultural initiatives in Downtown by

⁵⁹ According to Stadnicki, in 2011 there was 25% drop of profit among both state-owned construction companies and real estate investors (2014)

⁶⁰ Despite being pedestrianized in 1993, these projects were in dire need for renovation, given the lack of material quality used by the contractor, commission by the government to undertake the renovation process. Not to mention the lack of competence among the public utilities companies (El Kadi 2016).

⁶¹ Example mentioned in (Abaza 2017): The Gharib Morcos, an Art Deco Building that was built in 1916, the Kodak Buildings, built in 1924 (this was parallel with the renovation of the passageway of these buildings, as will be elaborated in details, a project carried by CLUSTER), the Davis Bryan Buildings (also known as El Shorbagy building), the 22 Abdel Khalek Tharwat Building, constructed in the 1920s, and Cinema Radio, built in the 1930s.

offering temporary venues (El Shimi 2015). Simultaneously, several cafes and restaurants have also opened in Downtown.

The changing features of Downtown have raised concerns from gentrification in the center of Cairo (Berger M.J. 2014). Kareem El Shafei CEO of Al-Ismaelia Real Estate Company stated in an interview conducted by Nicolas Kemper, that

“[C]ity centers in most developed cities hold the most expensive real estate; there is no reason why Cairo should be any different” (Kemper 2011, para. 20).

Although Al-Ismaelia's support to the art and culture in Downtown could be celebrated, yet, it is also coupled with fear of monopolizing and imposing a certain model of what is considered as part of Downtown's and Cairo's "culture" (Kemper 2011). As revealed by Abaza this process could be seen as "co-opting" strategy of revolutionary art for the neoliberal capitalist scheme of Cairo 2050 (2013).

4.8.2.2 A countering narrative to possible gentrification in Downtown

From a different point of view, it is argued that, these patterns do not necessarily suggest a winning story for the real estate investors, for Downtown's heterotopic character is rather a product of a long resilient history and not the recent brief experience of the 2011-revolution (Ryzova 2016).

Most upper-class and upper-middle class Egyptians aim for the gated communities developed on desert land in the eastern outskirts of Cairo, thus while Al-Ismaelia's efforts are exerted on attracting these classes to comeback and settle in Downtown, most of the current globalized young groups in Downtown are visitors who live elsewhere (Nagati and Stryker 2016). In addition the relocation of AUC (the American university in Cairo) to New Cairo⁶² resulted in further residential decline of foreign students and the daily commute of young middle and upper middle class. Only 20 percent of the buildings in Downtown are actually occupied with residents, not to mention that depopulation that occurred in Downtown is a result of a long-term gradual change that took place on the

⁶² New Cairo is one of the largest desert expansions on the fingers in Cairo

span of 40 years (El Shimi 2013), which humbles any attempts to gentrify the area in the near future. This however, is not to claim that gentrification might not be an inevitable outcome, given the above mentioned process by the real-estate and the government plans. It is merely to argue that while gentrification is one of the issues that should be considered in analyzing the urban development patterns in Downtown, it is crucial not to bracket these various initiatives under the umbrella of cultural gentrification, since it limits our understanding of these processes.

As the above review shows, Downtown Cairo is a highly contested area due to both, its symbolic significance -owned to its urban history and diverse culture and the recent events in 2011. Thus, adding to its attraction and situating it in a conflictual position among various stakeholders, which reflects its high pertinence to current debates on *public-making*. The next chapters provide an in-depth reading of four selected case studies, in order to better understand the ways these publics employed the potentials of Downtown's urban space for public-making and the transformations occurred through their power negotiation processes. First the following chapter will outline the methodological approach, research process and selection process of the four case studies, the methods adopted in the data collection and the tools used to analyze the data. Afterwards, the analysis of the cases and their findings will be presented.

CHAPTER 05

5 EMPIRICAL STUDY

5.1 Selection of case studies

The selection process of the case studies follows the *purposive sampling*- the cases are selected on the premises of their ability to provide better understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Baxter, P. and Jack, S. 2008). The selection processes started by locating initiatives that emerged in Downtown Cairo and started in 2011. In order to select cases that explain the phenomenon under study, the research's main priority was to find and analyze cases that at once share common underlying characteristics, in terms of being undertaken by non-governmental groups, located in Downtown and are distinctly active post-2011, but also divers enough, in relation to the three identified forms of public-making as presented in the theoretical framework, in order to gain a broader understanding of the phenomena. Therefore, a selection criterion has been added pertaining to the *type of the initiative*. Thus choosing different types of initiatives provides a wider scope and understanding of the phenomenon.

After a preliminary exploration of the existing initiatives in Downtown Cairo, through online platforms and secondary data, three main categories were identified:

- *Counter-cultural production (art, performing arts, film-making...etc.)*
- *Urban research and urban interventions in small-scale urban spaces*
- *Platforms for debates on urban issues (media, online newspaper, platforms, printed paper... etc.)*

The conceptual framework was employed as both an analytical tool to understand and analyze some the initiatives in Downtown Cairo as well as a guiding reference for the selection process of the case studies. As such the categories were identified in relation to the way they used urban space and their concern or motive (Table 1).

Table 1: Categorization of initiatives according to the type of activity and conceptual relation to urban space

Source: by author

Type of initiative (categorized according to the existing activities in Downtown Cairo)	Conceptual relation to urban space
Counter-cultural production (art, performing arts, film-making...etc.)	Finding venues that enable their intended activity. Appropriating potentials of urban space for their motives.
Urban research and urban interventions in small-scale urban spaces	Challenging the normative use of space in order to re-define an alternative way for producing and re-appropriating urban space.
Creating platforms for debates on urban issues (media, online newspaper, platforms, printed paper etc.)	Opening opportunities for negotiations

According to these categories, a number of initiatives as potential case studies were selected. During the first week of the first field visit in October 2016, the potential cases were narrowed down to four case studies. Although the first selection phase focused on initiatives in Downtown Cairo, that started in 2011, nonetheless, after assessing the situation, based on the first field visit, October 15th - November 14th, 2016, it has been realized that some of the selected cases were no longer active and other initiatives, that were established long before 2011, played an active role during and after the revolution in 2011.

Thus, *Townhouse gallery* was included in the selection process, since it was vital for understanding changes in the dynamics before and after 2011. Since, the activities covered by some of these case studies, were found across the three identified categories above, thus one case study could be designated to more than one category- at once a space of cultural production and also involved in creating platforms for debates. In this regard cases that practice multiple types of activities were prioritized in the selection process.

The selection process culminated by choosing four case studies:

1. **ZAWYA (independent cinema)**
2. **TOWNHOUSE GALLERY (independent art spaces)**
3. **CLUSTER (Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research)**
4. **MANTIQTI (hyper-local printed newspaper).**

It is important to note that the cases analyzed in this research could be considered as a representative of the variegated forms of *public-making* that are occurring in Downtown Cairo. Therefore, they are not put in comparison to each other; rather they are treated as different examples that widen our understanding of the phenomenon.

5.2 Data collection methods

Regarding the field investigation, the researcher first drafted a structure that identified the type of data needed. This structure was mainly guided by the research questions and the identified objective. Subsequently, multi-data collection methods were selected, each in accordance to their suitability for the required data. The research relied on three data collection methods;

1. In-depth semi structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are useful for gaining in-depth knowledge about the subject under study. They offer an opportunity for other related topics to arise in the conversation which might prove to be significant part of the data, later in the analysis phase. Thus, it was important for the *interview guide* to be marked by openness, flexibility and sensitive to the contextual nature of the data (Flick 2009; Hancock, D.R. and Algozzine, B. 2006). This included questions about the actors, their inspirations, motives and the contexts of their actions, including detailed information on the implementation process of their projects (Appendix A). The in depth-semi-structured interviews were conducted with the curators of the initiatives and other experts, particularly entrepreneurs in Downtown Cairo and experts in the field of urban development who took a consulting role in various developments projects in Downtown Cairo.

2. Non-participant observations

Non-participant observations and casual interviews with users were conducted for two months each in 2016 and 2017 in Downtown Cairo in order to observe the material arrangement of the built environment (physical artifact), daily modifications and re-appropriations in the sites and the interaction between various groups, including personal experience through the use of the spaces. The aim of the observation was twofold, at once it helps triangulate the collected data from the interviews and second it provided detailed description of the physical settings, where the observer could discover unspoken aspects, highly relevant to the research (Sussman, R. 2016). Doing so, the research followed a systematic structure of obtaining the data; guided by the ethnographic procedures- a schedule of observation was designed, enlisting the type of data to be collected (Appendix B). Guided by the template, every session (Appendix C) started by introducing the settings and the position of the researcher in the space and then information were registered every 15 minutes and random entries were recorded when a relevant event occurred (Ng, C. F. 2016).

3. Document review (online media, newspapers, photos and formal studies)

This data collection process focused on chronological data that indicates gradual changes on the level of Downtown and on the level of each case. Further data were collected regarding temporal events that occurred during the past 5-6 years following the revolution in 2011. Extensive focus was on *Mantiqti wasat el Balad*, since, in addition to being a case study in this research it is also a local newspaper that started since 2011 focusing on Downtown Cairo.

5.3 Data analysis methods

The first step was preparing and processing the data for analysis. Raw data in the form of audio recordings were translated. Doing so, detailed transcription of verbal and non-verbal interactions was undertaken, which in the case of the interview could be recognized from the tone and the way the information was communicated by the participant and in the case of observation was registered in the recoding during the observation session, this is because in qualitative data collection and analysis all forms of interactions are responsible for conveying meaning, thus features of talk such as emphasis, speed, tone of voice, timing and pauses are all registered in the transcripts, for they are considered crucial for interpreting data (Bailey, J. 2008). Since the data was predominantly in Arabic language, the data collected was first translated 'literally' by the researcher, including the registration of certain Arabic expressions, names and ways of communicating and then the interpretation was conducted later. Several field notes also kept through the empirical study, which provided contextual information about the settings and various situations of interviews and observation settings.

The research conducted three data analysis methods:

1. **Qualitative content analysis** (structured analytical process, in order to ensure a comprehensive management and evaluation of the data).
2. **Processual analysis** (For pattern recognition and uncovering interplays between *agents*, *actions* and *context* over time).
3. **Situational analysis** (Provide an opportunity to make new relations between heterogeneous elements) - An analytical tool influenced by ANT and Method assemblage methodological logic.

As mentioned before, ANT was used as a guiding methodological approach for a number of reasons; it helps maintain an explorative sense in the data analysis process and a flexible coalescence and review of the emerging concepts from the data. The significance of ANT for this research lies in its ability to provide a flexible terrain to navigate different and multiple roles of the actors in certain configurations or processes. For example, the role of real estate investors, despite the preconceived understanding of their role as dominant powers in capitalist modes of production, yet in certain processes they are also

enablers. This is not to argue that the interest and agenda of real estate developers is not profit oriented. Rather it refers to the way ANT differentiates between the temporal roles of different actors in different actor-networks (processes) in a methodological sense, apart from their interest. Doing so, overcomes the confinements of binary models and their dichotomies in understanding the enactment of socio-spatial worlds (Latour 2005a). Among those main principles is also tracing the process and mapping the sites of such process, which help reveal that the spatiality of producing *publicness* is variegated.

Since the translation of the ANT tools from Science and Technology Studies into the field of urban studies is relatively new and being currently developed in an almost experimental mode. The existing literature on the adoption of ANT in urban research reflects rather a “*prospective*” way of adopting ANT and *Method Assemblage* in urban studies, than a concrete methodological framework for data analysis (Farías 2009). In addition, while it offers an analytical tool that abolished dualisms, yet in itself it is not a unified theory (Ponti, M. 2011). Therefore, despite the need for an analytical approach that appreciates the messiness of social processes and allows for creating and linking seemingly unrelated heterogeneous elements in new relationships, there is equally a need for structured analytical process, in order to ensure a comprehensive management and evaluation of the data.

Accordingly, in addition to the adoption of ANT, the research resorts to already established data analysis methods for qualitative case study research, namely qualitative content analysis. Schreier provides a detailed guide for conducting qualitative content analysis, which was adopted in this research. This process starts with building the coding frame; starting by theming the data⁶³, designating the data to various elementary codes (incl. In-vivo, process and descriptive codes) and categories (Saldana 2015; Lofland, John, and Lyn H. Lofland 1995). then trial of the frame by conducting pilot coding, which involved several cycles of direct interpretation and categorical aggregation (Baxter, P. and Jack, S 2008; Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, R. 2006) and ends by the finishing the main analysis, where all the data is coded and thus findings could be

⁶³ Theming the data here does not refer to thematic analysis, which often take part at a further phase of the data analysis process, rather it refer to allocating the raw data into different domains based on the topic it covers.

outlined (Schreier, M. 2014). During this systematic process, the research continuously scrutinize every section of the data, questions whether if it is relevant to the research questions and determine the various potential categories under which such content might fall (*ibid*). The coding of the data was conducted via software (QDA Miner lite) for qualitative data analysis (Appendix D). After the coding process (which involved various coding cycles) different parts of the coded data were retrieved for a second analysis, where extensive analytic memos were generated. After the articulation of the finding of each case study separately, a cross-sectional analysis of the cases was conducted, in order to draw common patterns and explore their transferability.

The data analysis of the case studies was designed under the aegis of “*method assemblage*”- “*detect, resonate with, and amplify particular patterns of relations in the excessive and overwhelming fluxes of the real*”(Law, J. 2004, p.14), which by definition is processual and situational. Processual, since it calls for an understanding of realities or “*presence*” as ongoing, becoming, and always changing, and situational, for it is premised on the “*making of relations*” (Law, J. 2004, p.84). Thus, the model designed in this research constitutes two types of analysis. First, it aims to understand or rather trace the process of public-making undertaken by these groups and second, analyze the role of the urban space within this process and the implication of this process on the built environment. The first focuses on the timeline of the initiative from its inception until the current situation.

The first analysis aims to answer the first research question – [***How did the production of publicness change in Downtown Cairo in the aftermath of the revolution 2011?***]

Processual analysis: this analysis looked at certain managerial performances undertaken in order to implement projects in each initiative. They are also explored in their sequential nature, since they unfold through time. As such, they are revealing cumulative processes that are linked to the event that preceded and helped register gradual change. This could be described as providing a *thick description*⁶⁴ of the process. Thick

⁶⁴ The term was first introduced by anthropologist Clifford Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures* 1973(Ponterotto 2006)

description refers to the descriptive interpretation of complex situations (Ponterotto 2006). While it is not applied on an observed behavior, as usually the case in this approach, yet the resonance lies in providing nuanced readings of the *process*, focusing on three intertwined aspects: the concern of the group under study, their mode of application and the role of urban space in manifesting and realizing these motives and concerns. Pettigrew, Andrew M.⁶⁵ is considered one of the founders of *processual analysis*. Its essence could be captured in the following explanation

” [...] **agency** is at the heart of any processual analysis. **Actions** drive processes but processes cannot be explained just by reference to individual or collective agency. Actions are embedded in **contexts** which limit their information, insight and influence. But the dual quality of agents and contexts must always be recognized. Contexts are shaping and shaped Actors are producers and products (Giddens, 1979. Sztompka, 1991). Crucially for any processual analysis, this interchange between agents and context occurs over time and is **cumulative**” (Pettigrew, A., M., 1997, p. 338-339).

Although events and chronology are at the core of *Processual analysis*, yet it does not produce *case history* but rather *case study* (*ibid*). For it employs various analytical goals. First, it aims at searching for patterns within the process. Second, it seeks to identify underlying mechanisms in the patterns observed. These mechanisms are not necessarily intentional actions by key actors, they could also be contextual aspects or elements that lie in interactive fields and governed by their link with various levels of the process. Third, they attempt to strike a balance between deduction and induction. In other words, in the recognition of patterns, to be guided by the hypothesis and research objectives as much as allow the raw data to provide evidence and uncover certain realities (Pettigrew, A., M., 1997).

It is important to point out that *processual analysis* is not merely about analyzing a process but also linking the process to the outcomes. In the application of this

⁶⁵ Pettigrew's background is anthropology and sociology. His work particularly focused on Strategy and Organization

analytical method, there is no one ideal set of procedures to follow, therefore, the integration of a structured analytical method such as the qualitative content analysis was employed, since similar to the latter method, the main feature of conducting process research is by means of several cycles of deduction and induction that are guided by primary objectives, themes and questions (*ibid*).

The second level of analysis aims to answer the second research question-***[In which way are the middle-class groups using the urban space of Downtown Cairo to produce different forms of public-making?]***

The second analysis could be referred to as *Situational Analysis* (also called: *relational analyses*) (Clarke, A. E. 2003). *Situational analysis* is a qualitative method that is influenced by feminist and science and technology studies and aims at regenerating Grounded theory by extending its analytical range to include power dynamics, discourse, context, non-human environment (Clarke, A. E. 2009). Clarke introduces three types of mapping that could be incorporated within the framework of grounded theory in order to overcome certain dualism and allow for new discoveries from the data: the first is *Situational maps*; mapping and analyzing all elements (human and non-human) involved in the situation of concern. This technique is not meant to organize the chaotic nature of social processes but rather provide an opportunity to make new relations between elements.

This kind of mapping could resonate with the line of thoughts offered by ANT (Clarke, A. E. 2009), as well as *affordance* mapping, where elements, if positioned in a certain relationship, present an affordance. The second is *Social worlds/arenas maps*; mapping collective actors and their ongoing negotiations. This map aims at looking at patterns of collective actions and the way it achieves its goals. These methods upgrade the analytic work to a more conceptual level (Clarke, A. E. 2003). Relating this type of mapping to the context of the research, these could refer to the *publics* and their relationships within the arena of Downtown Cairo. It is another level of analysis that looks at the environment in terms of power-negotiations and the form of power deployed. The third is *Positional Maps*; laying out all the positions taken and *not* taken in the situation. This includes position or view point of individuals or groups. It also considers multiple positions taken

by one entity, which could be contradictory positions. The research adopts this technique by incorporating a certain coding, where the roles of actors are considered independently from the nature of their activity. It is important to note that the maps themselves are not final products, but rather an analytical tool that helped in producing memos and conceptual notes through which final conclusions could emerge.

Situational Analysis shares some characteristics with *Method assemblage*, since both aim at making-visible all the hidden but directly related elements involved in the production process. While Clarke's philosophical claims might be considered as too much of a promise according to some critics, yet she offers various examples on how an analytical technique for Law's *Method assemblage*, could be implemented (Mathar, T. 2008). Therefore, this research will borrow some of the techniques offered by Clarke in order to focus on multiple temporal events in the site, where various invisible connections are revealed. The situational analysis will analyze the coded data by holding the following stance:

In this research situations analyzed reflects the intersection between the process and its spatiality. Since these processes (the initiatives) intend to serve the interest of and address the concerns of a certain *public*, they are inherently conflictual. Thus, negotiations are rendered intrinsic for their achievement. This involves the deployment of different *forms of power*. The *form of power* refers to the way of employing different potentials to realize an achievement. Yet, the ability of certain elements to provide potentials for the required motive is not premised on individual elements, rather, the *situatedness* and contingencies of various heterogeneous elements (human and non-human) in relation to the motives or goals (Clarke, A.E. 2003), display *affordances* that could be enacted for the achievement of these goals. Thus certain configurations afford and enable certain activities. By laying out these connections and configurations, temporal activation of certain material configurations are explored, thus detecting occurring urban transformations with regard to the production of *publicness*.

Content analysis for printed local newspaper *Mantiqti*; covered three different levels of analysis.

First, the content of the information in the newspaper and the recorded physical changes in the district, particularly related to publicly used space. Second, the symbolic and iconic language that is used to describe different places in Downtown and the attached ideologies in relation to the newspaper and their views. Third, the main actors involved in the struggle, contestation or process of development that are mentioned by the newspaper (in addition to other ones that might be involved but (intentionally/or unintentionally) not mentioned in the document.

These methods of analysis are simultaneously applied, were the researcher goes back and forth between looking at the holistic process and focusing in the depth of situations. The data analysis follows different points of departure depending on the type of the initiative and role of urban space in the process. Themes sharing similar conceptual content were organized into groups; these were further sorted under global themes. Each thematic network was described and explored using theory to orient its analyses and quotations from interviews were used to illustrate analyses. Finally by tracing the patterns of each case study (cross-section analysis); it will also collaborate in trying to learn about the transferability of these modes of practice in other contexts.

Objective: The case studies will reveal the interface between private and public uses of space, formal and informal modes of practice and strategic and tactical approaches to public-making and how these power relations are negotiated, including the interplays between different actors. These interpretive descriptions of each case serve to frame the contextual findings in which the initiatives emerged. It also aims to reflect how the mode of *public-making* transformed or resulted in temporary transformations and ephemeral experiences with regard to the built environment, which is charted in three levels.

- **First**, changes that took place on the level of the physical space (permanent alteration of the urban space).
- **Second**, is introducing an alternative use of the urban space resulting in temporal alteration of the space (showing different or temporal situations).
- **Third**, is a change that did not occur physically, but rather in the perception and how it led to constructing socio-spatial imaginaries based on the changed perception.

These three levels are not necessarily found equally in the four case studies. Rather, each case study reveals one level of transformation. In one case however, given the diversity of their activities, the three levels of transformation could be seen depending on the project undertaken by the initiative.

Limitations in the fieldwork

Although photography was planned as one of the data collection methods, nonetheless, after the protests of 2011 in Downtown Cairo, it has been announced by the local authorities that taking photos in Downtown Cairo is not allowed and doing so would lead to questioning by the police and confiscation of the camera. During the first field visit this issue was realized, and it could not be used as a reliable data collection method. In order to overcome this limitation, it was replaced by field observations and detailed audio recording that would provide description of the activities occurring and the spatial setting.

CHAPTER 06

6 FINDINGS OF FOUR CASE STUDIES

6.1 Introduction of the study area

Before exploring the forms of *public-making* in the following case studies this section aims to summarize the prevailing situation in Downtown Cairo- under which the following case studies are analyzed. The previous chapters shed the light on current processes that rose concerns on possible gentrification instigated by both the government's renovation plan as well as the efforts exerted by the real-estate developers to support the growing alternative art and cultural scenes. The impact of such processes is however humbled by many factors that make Downtown Cairo a predominantly mixed neighbourhood. Currently Downtown is characterized by its bohemian life, one that existed long before 2011, but is becoming increasingly attractive for new globalized alternative groups (Ryzova 2013, Naaman 2011).

Meanwhile, it is dominated by the popular class, street vendors and visiting youth from the neighbouring popular/poor districts who hang out in its street cafes, cinemas and bars. Yet it is claimed by nostalgic elites and intellectuals who are trying to bring the 'good old days' of the khedival era, which is still manifested by both the khedival architecture and the urban fabric of the district that is marked by French typology and above all is undergoing a new process of heritage conservation initiated by the government and recently attracted the private investors (Volait 2013; El Kadi and Elkerdani 2006). This in turn brings the issue of how the government is 'cleaning up' the area from street vendors and street cafes and enforcing strict rules of conduct in public space to the frontline of the relationship between the people and the state (Abaza 2014).

In Downtown, both the corporate headquarters of various banks including the national bank, the stock exchange and many insurance companies co-exist with the *Sha'bi*

(popular) cafes, car repair workshops and garages, *baladi* (traditional) bars and old rundown night clubs, various workshops as well as fashion boutiques and elite art spaces, old European style groceries, second hand markets and black markets. In spite of the government's control over the use of public space and high censorship on cultural production, Downtown remains a place that hosts 'alternative' groups; those who are mostly interested in joining spaces of counter-cultural production, including its informal intellectual institutions (Cafes) that was frequented by Egypt's most famous intellectuals through history. Aside from the traditional male dominated 'ahwa (coffee shop) and the European café, in Downtown there is a third type of 'ahwa as well, namely, a mixed gender street café, it is a type of coffee shop that operates and shares the same features of a traditional 'ahwa⁶⁶ but is frequented by young women and alternative groups.

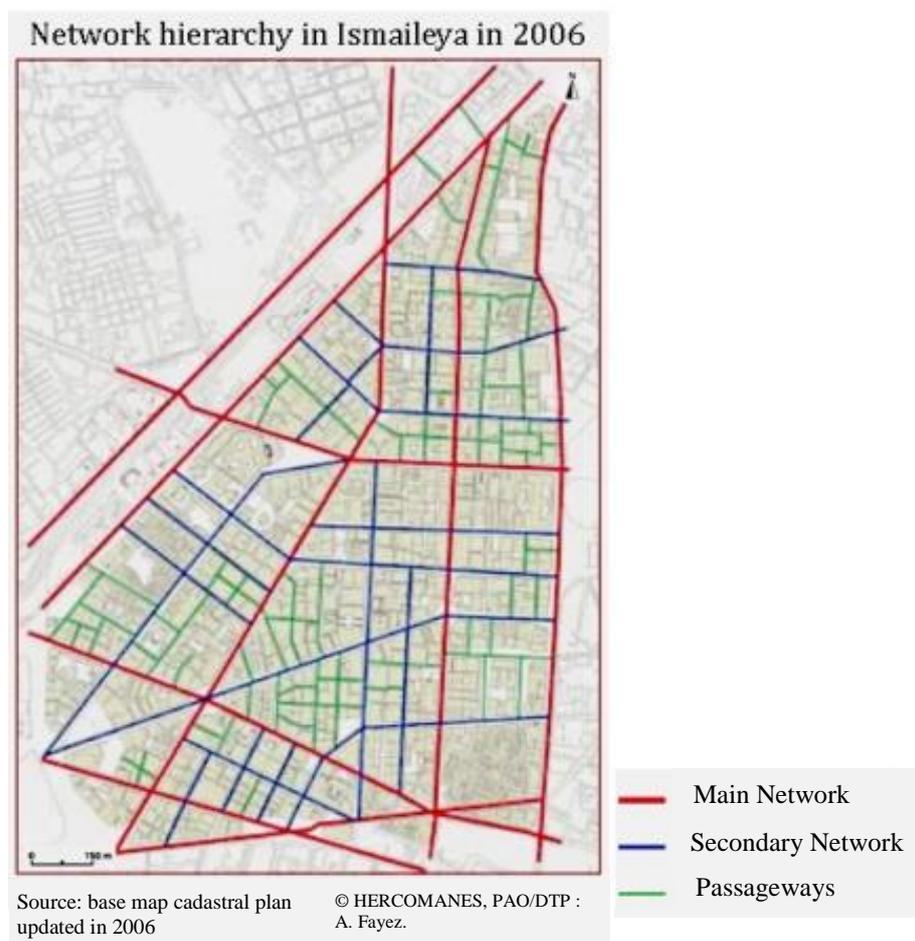
The readings of the prevailing situation reflects the gap between two modes of spatial production, one dictated by dominating power and the other negotiating its way to re-appropriate urban space. While the government and the joint private sector are advancing in their neo-liberal plan under the banner of preserving the Belle Époque, the actual reality of Downtown, reflects a “[...] lively *sha’abi* area (popular, poor working class [that] hosts a significant part of informal-sector activities” (Abaza 2011, p. 1079), and since 2011 has been mixed with a wave of young “global alternative class”. In reality however, as will be shown in the case studies, it is hardly possible to draw clear lines between these patterns of urbanism.

6.1.1 The Morphology of Downtown Cairo

The area under study is a triangular shaped area, referred to as khedival Cairo (formerly the Ismaileya quarter). It is surrounded by Gumhureya Street in the east, Al-Tahrir Street in the south and Ramses Boulevard in the west and cornered by three main squares- Tahrir Square in the southwest, Ramses square in the north and Abdin in the south. The urban network encompasses a total of 143 blocks over an area of 119 ha, with an average surface area of 0.8 ha, and roads covering an area of 25 ha. The total number of buildings

⁶⁶ Typically a traditional coffee shop is mainly male dominated, and is a place where men meet smoke shisha, play domino and backgammon and watch football matches. In many cases there is an outdoor sitting area is along the side walk.

is 1,576. 425 of these buildings are categorized as architecturally significant with great heritage value (Al Kadi 2012). The street network of Downtown is typically divided into primary and secondary roads forming a perpendicular grid crisscrossed by diagonal streets (e.g. Kasr al-Nil Street , a financial axis) that runs in the middle of the area and forms a set of smaller squares within it (such as Talat Harb square and Mostafa Kamel Square). One of the most distinctive features of Downtown is a second category of network formed by various types of passageways (Map 2), some are covered and run across the ground floors and others are open and connect between buildings (*ibid*).



Map 2: The three categories of networks in Downtown Cairo
 Source: retrieved from *Al Kadi 2012*, p.167

These passageways are buzzed with public life and marked by a cosmopolitan character. These passageways bear many features that reflect the historical layers of the district- From shopping arcades that was designed at the in the 19th century and became a shopping destination for the upper middle-class in the 1960s, streets that we

pedestrianized by the government as part of the heritage conservation plan in the 1990s (*ibid*) to setbacks between buildings and courtyards that incrementally transformed into a passageway and small streets that were informally pedestrianized (CLUSTER 2015) in the same pattern found in popular neighborhoods in Cairo. These passageways form a hidden network that not only constitutes various uses (incl. restaurant and cafes, traditional coffee-shops, retails, repair-shops, and groceries) that reflects the everyday life of the inhabitants of Downtown (both residents and daily visitors), but also played a cardinal role at the time of the revolution. These latent spaces were a refuge for the revolutionaries, to form networks, receive supplies and resources during the 18 days of the sit-in period...etc. (Interview 161024, 2016)⁶⁷, particularly Al-Bursa area (CLUSTER 2015).

⁶⁷ Based on an interview with one of the revolutionaries (Interview conducted November 2016 in Cairo)

6.2 CASE STUDY 1: ZAWYA

Zawya is an independent cinema that focuses on alternative films, documentaries and experimental work from all over the world. Although Zawya is affiliated with MIF (Misr International Films)⁶⁸ yet, Zawya's group of curators are an independent administrative body in terms of staff, searching for funding and establishing the project's plans and programs (Youssef Shazli, personal communication November 7, 2016). It was founded in 2014 in Downtown Cairo, using one of the screening halls in Cinema Odeon- located off Talaat Harb Street. Zawya is concerned with "*promoting the work of young Egyptian and Arab filmmakers*" and simultaneously "*provide interested audience an alternative than the monopolized film-industry in Egypt, by using already existing film theaters for their screening*" (Zawya 2015)⁶⁹. In addition, Zawya organizes discussion-events after some screenings with the film directors (Youssef Shazli, personal communication November 7, 2016)⁷⁰.

6.2.1 Finding a venue for Zawya

One of the challenges Zawya faced was to find the suitable venue for this type of initiative. Shazli explains that, besides being central and accessible, Downtown Cairo has a lot of old film theaters that could offer a good opportunity for small-scale projects like Zawya. This opportunity is reinforced by the challenge of cinema's in Downtown to keep operating, since they are less frequented by audience and cannot compete with the new cinema complexes that are popping up everywhere in Cairo. In addition, these "*arthouse cinemas*" have a different atmosphere than the new film theaters, found for instance in Citystars⁷¹. Choosing Cinema Odeon was based on two factors, it is approximately near to the administrative office of Zawya and the exit door of Cinema Odeon- leading to a narrow back alley (Map 3)- provides an opportunity for Zawya to create its independent space using the exist side of Cinema Odeon as an entrance/exist for Zawya (Figure 2).

⁶⁸ One of the largest film companies in the Middle East.

⁶⁹ Retrieved from Zawya's official website: <http://www.zawyaicinema.com/about/index>. Accessed on September 15, 2019

⁷⁰ Youssef Shazli is the cinema's managing director and the son of the project's founder; the filmmaker and producer Marianne Khoury.

⁷¹ Citystars is one of the largest retail and entertainment complexes/Malls in Cairo

In Odeon Cinema, there are three screening halls in total- Zawya uses the smallest one designed for 175 persons (Space manger, personal communication, May 22, 2017).



-  Cinema Odeon's building
-  Cinema Odeon's entrance
-  Zawya's entrance/Exit
-  Zawya's activated space before and after screening

Map 3: showing the spatial relation between both Cinemas and the resulted opportunity for Zawya to establish its own space

Source: Map retrieved from CLUSTER 2015, illustration by author

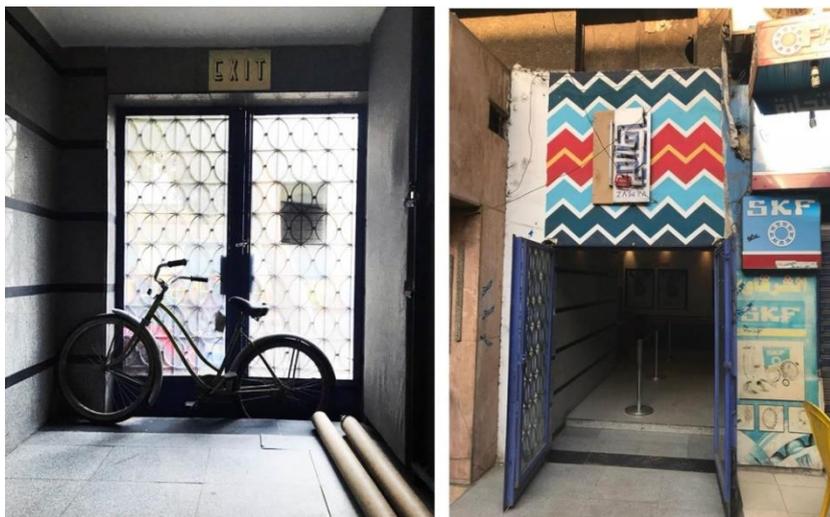
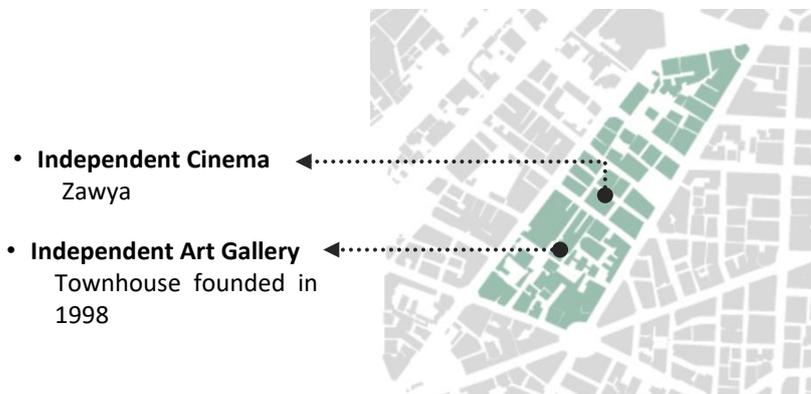


Figure 2: Exit doors of Cinema Odeon. Right figure, is the first exist (used as entrance for Zawya). Left figure is the second exit (unused).

Source: by author, November 2016.

The **location** of Cinema Odeon and its proximity to other cultural initiatives such as Townhouse gallery- an alternative art gallery that was founded in Downtown since the 1998- provides Zawya with further advantages (Map 4). This non-profit art gallery, opened in an alleyway that intersects with Ma'aruf Street, which is known for its car repair workshops, garages and small shops specializing in selling automotive parts, including a number of popular cheap restaurants and coffee shops (Abaza 2011). The success of Townhouse to establish itself as an alternative art space in a predominantly popular area created a sense of tolerance and co-existence between these different social groups, thus paving the way for other alternative/independent cultural venues to set their project in the area.



Map 4: Locational proximity of both initiatives in Ma'aruf area, Downtown Cairo
Source: base map El Kadi 2012. Editing and illustration by author

The passageway that leads to Zawya's entrance, houses car repair shops, shops selling car part and two popular coffee shops, set along the passage (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Different uses along the passage. Right figure shows the popular coffee shop and the car-parts shop next to Zawya's entrance. Left figure shows cars parking in front of a car repair shop
Source: by author, October 2016.

At the beginning there were doubts whether the project would fit in this environment, yet, given the narrow lobby inside Zawya (Figure 4), the audience usually preferred to wait outside before the screenings and hang out at the coffee shop, instigating a complementary relationship between Zawya and the coffee shop (Figure 5 and Figure 6).



Figure 4: figures illustrate the lack of space in the lobby of Zawya. Left figure is a view of the entrance. Right figure is view of the lobby inside Zawya
Source: by author, October 2016.



Figure 5: View of the coffee shops in the passageway, reflecting the informal extension of the coffee shop along the passage. The passage is vibrant with customers of the coffee shop, most of which are not from the audience of Zawya.

Source: by author, May 2017.



Figure 6: View of the other side of the passageway, showing the occupation of the audience of Zawya mixed with other groups.

Source: by author, May 2017.

Similarly, since the opposite side of the alleyway is a garage, some member of the audience of Zawya parks their cars there. The idea of starting this project goes back to 2009, when the group of Zawya attempted to establish this project under the name

Cinemanía in *Citystars*. Yet, due to the high rental costs it was not feasible to start a project that screens non-commercial films (Youssef Shazli, personal communication, November 7, 2016). In furtherance of the potentials of Downtown as a venue, was the timing, which played a key role for the project. As stated by Shazli “[...] *the spirit of the revolution encouraged us to revisit the idea of starting the project and we knew it has to be in Downtown*” (ibid).

The following part presents three Figures (Figure 7, 8 and 9), that provides a visual illustration of the space, its characteristics and patterns of its use.



The garage provides the coffee shop with a dead edge that allows for installing their sitting area and extending along the passageway

The passageway is considered as an insignificant space shrouded by the building around it and hidden. While it is a public space, yet it provides certain degree of *privacy* and thus freedom to initiate activities that requires public gathering without being stopped.

Figure 7: The back passageway of Cinema Odeon, where the exit of Cinema Odeon leads to
Source: by author, November 2016.

It is important to point out that screening football match in coffee shops was banned in Downtown since it encourages public-gatherings (Mantiqti 2014). Nonetheless, the hidden nature of the passageway allowed the people to gather and watch the match in the popular coffee shop without being bothered by the authorities.



(a) Zawya using the front of the car repair shop after its working hours to set its information desk.

(b) Audience of Zawya partially attending to the information desk and the other part is waiting outside before the screening.

(c) Audience of Zawya sitting and discussing at the seating area of the coffee shop.

Figure 8: Passageway in the night occupied by various activities reflecting the extension of Zawya's space and its merging between public and private

Source: by author, Mai 2017.

(a) In the field visit October 2016, it has been noticed that the information desk, particularly in the opening days of film festivals is inside. In 2017, Zawya had established itself and learned from other activities, thus setting their information desk outside. (b) This space is usually filled with cars in the morning, since it is appropriated by the car repair shop as a working space, as shown in (Figure 3). (c) Most of the customers using the popular coffee shop and sitting directly opposite to the entrance of Zawya are from the audience of Zawya.



Figure 9: view shows the space of Zawya closed at 10 p.m. and the usual customers of the coffee shop expanding back to occupy the chairs that were formerly used by Zawya’s audience, discussing and have drinks after the screening.

Source: by author, Mai 2017.

6.2.2 Negotiating the survival and growth of Zawya

After negotiating with the administration of Cinema Odeon, Zawya acquired a trial period to use the small screening hall and demonstrate their ability to attract enough audience. Doing so, Zawya was able to continue renting the small screening hall in Cinema Odeon. This agreement, however, did not include a contract (Zohdi 2018). In addition Zawya was not able to use the screening hall during the holiday seasons in Egypt, for they were used by Cinema Odeon. Since the revenue from the tickets, which was less than quarter the price of other commercial cinemas in Cairo, was shared between the distributor and Cinema Odeon, Zawya hardly gained capital- mainly by applying for grants and sponsorships. Without funds and authority there was no chance to renovate the place or install new digital technologies in the screening halls, in addition to the dilemma of censorship-applying for permission from the government to screen the films (Youssef Shazli, personal communication, November 7, 2016). As stated by Ayman: “*The most*

powerful person in this equation is almost always the junior bureaucrat you have to get past. So it comes down to human interaction in the end." (Zohdi 2018, para 61)⁷².

Despite these challenging conditions Zawya was willing to negotiate their way towards achieving their purpose. This was at times attainable by screening commercial films from time to time in order to acquire some capital to support their non-profit programs. While the Cinema was open for all, yet, based on the casual interviews it became clear that most of the audience are members of the filmmaking industry, from students to young directors and producers, who are friends or acquaintances of Zawya's group of curators (Youssef Shazli, personal communication, November 7, 2016). According to Zawya's space manager this changed slowly and more audience from the general public is coming to Zawya (personal communication, May 22, 2017).

In 2018 Zawya moved to another venue in Downtown; Karim Cinema in Emad Eddin Street. Since their audience grew in number they were able to move to a more strategic location. Zawya's ticket prices increased the double, yet it remains cheaper than other cinemas and does not provide enough capital for Zawya to self-fund its programs and activities, thus trapping them in the challenge of applying for grants and funds. With the relocation and the success of the initiative, Zawya's concern/purpose has evolved as well- it is best summarized by Ayman's⁷³ statement:

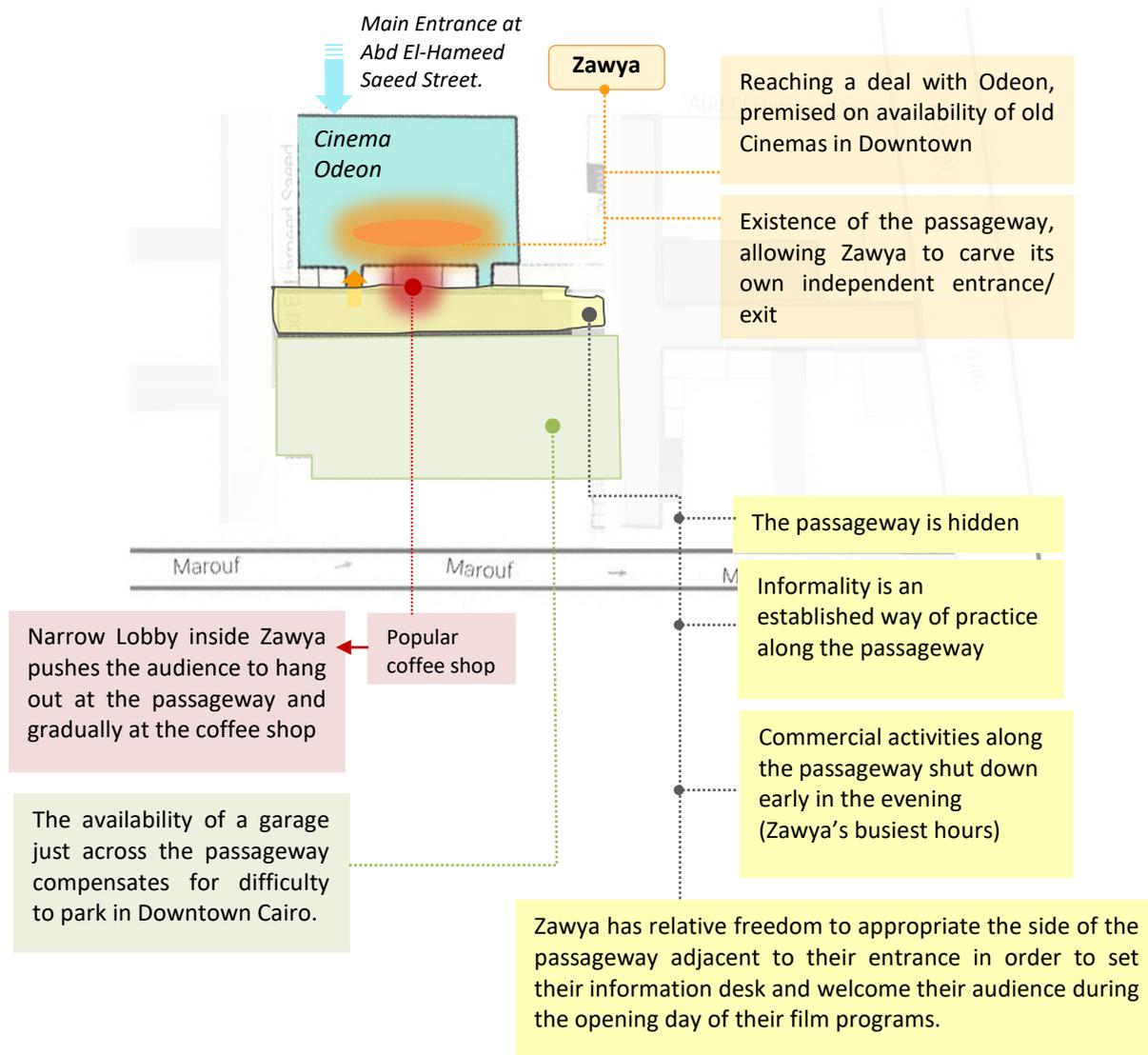
"[We] will contribute less to reifying the concept of "arthouse cinema" and focus more on challenging it [,] question the factors that create this very idea of arthouse films [,] what exactly is [Zawya] independent from or alternative to? [...]Zawya does not play the role of "discovering" films that are significant [...]but rather brings to the public films that are already recognized.[T]he least that could be done is to scrutinize the system through which such recognition is born [...]Who sets the criteria? [...] We need to examine the current global sphere within which we move [...] What is their effect on us, as filmmakers and programmers? [...]This current system is clearly not working for us [;] many Arab filmmakers [...] from Cairo to Beirut and lots of other places, [...] are frustrated because they have no money and can't get their films made"(Zohdi 2018, para 38-40).

⁷² Yasmine Zohdi the culture editor of the independent online newspaper Mada Masr-also founded post-2011

⁷³ Alia Ayman is Zawya's head curator of special programs

6.2.3 Appropriation of urban spaces for counter-cultural production

This process of trying to promote the work of young film makers was enabled by the affordance of Downtown as a venue. Following Clerk’s technique of *Situational mapping* in order to the map *Relationality* of key heterogeneous elements in a situation (2009), the map below (Map 5) outlines various relationships between the materiality of this form of public-making and other elements.

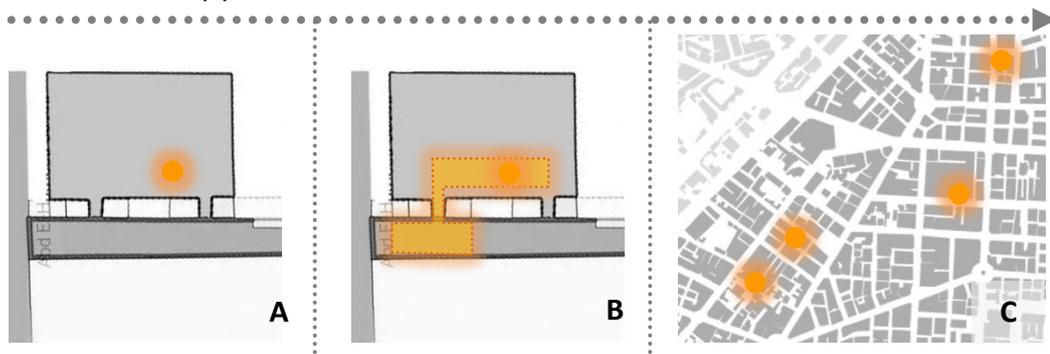


Map 5: Map shows Cinema Odeon, the passageway, the small space owned by the coffee shop, the garage opposite to the Cinema, all bordered Ma’ruf street from the bottom and two other passages from both sides.

Source: CLUSTER 2015, Illustration, comments and editing by Author

Since 2014, Zaywa has activated several types and scales of urban spaces in Downtown for non-hegemonic cultural production. In 2018, Zaywa moved to another venue in Downtown, more strategic, bigger space and more managerial control and with this upgrade, Zaywa’s purpose has evolved as well- now trying to challenge the idea of an “*arthouse cinema*” and question the criteria through which films are selected and not only screen already awarded independent films. The ability of **Zawya’s physical space** to continuously expand and shrink and even multiply depending on the activity, was enabled by the availability of a flexible space-governance system between Zawya, Cinema Odeon (Map 6), in addition to Townhouse Theater “Rawabet” and the symbiotic relationship between Zawya and the coffee.

Since 2014, the urban spaces have been activated and made public by this type of non-hegemonic cultural production; continuously shrinking, limited to the screening hall (A), and expanding to the passageway and the coffee shop (B) and at times multiplying at various venues in Downtown (C).



Map 6: Illustration maps revealing the activated spaces by the activity of Zawya in various times on the level of the small-scale space of Odeon Cinema and the passageway (first two maps) and on the level of Downtown (third map).

Source: small scale map (CLUSTER 2015), Downtown map (El Kadi 2012). Editing and illustration by author.

Crucial to this process is the material affordance of urban space. Here, Downtown’s urban space has been used as a *venue for their public concern*. By mapping and analyzing this affordance based on the data collected which follows the methodological suggestions of ANT (Latour 1992), as illustrated above, it became clear that it was not limited to the availability of physical public space, but other key-factors displayed different types of affordance. In other words, this affordance is not limited to single objects but rather to

their *situatedness* (Clarke, A. E. 2003) - the potentials crystalized by the relation between the need and the available conditions.

On the level of Downtown, the existence of many old film theaters (Figure 10), the established network of various initiatives that support each other and the timing of the project- shortly after the revolution. Moreover, Townhouse cooperates with Zawya by offering their theater space “Rawabet” for screening, if needed, during busy seasons for Zawya such as the “festival movies programme”.

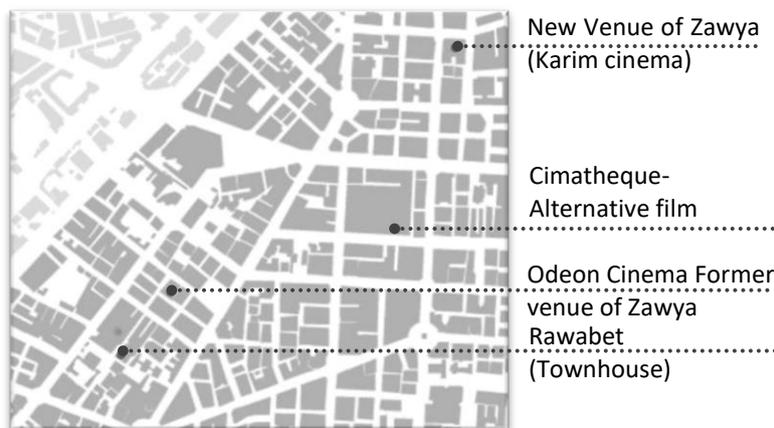


Figure 10: figure shows the venues where Zawya, both, regularly and occasionally screen film
Source: map (El Kadi 2012). Compilation by author.

The potentials of Downtown crystalized through a combination between the availability of various spaces for screening, which regularly took place in Odeon Cinema and occasionally multiplied in other spaces, in addition to the factors outlined below:

- Emergence of supporting network among cultural initiatives after 2011,
- Proximity to other cultural initiatives
- renewed motivation after 2011 to revisit the idea of Zawya
- Established familiarity between two different social classes (alternative groups and popular working class) in the area long before 2011
- Interest of financial support from non-governmental institutions to support “revolutionary art”
- Arrival of a new interested *public* frequenting Downtown
- Absence of strict control from the government, during the first 3-4 years post-2011
- Adopting global model of *art-house* cinema in order to enable counter-cultural production.

Zawya was continuously engaged in a multi-dimensional process of power negotiations, even with the government to get permit for screening. At times co-opting for certain conditions, e.g. screening commercial films for funding, in order to gradually grow. The established interface between the *informal* and *formal* in Downtown supported Zawya to combine both approaches for their *public-making*. For example, given the narrow space inside Zawya they appropriate the side of the passageway adjacent to their entrance in order to set their information desk and welcome their audience during busy film programs (Figure 11), reflects how it adopted the strategy of informal practices –*quit encroachment* (Bayat 2010) - appropriation more space for its activities.

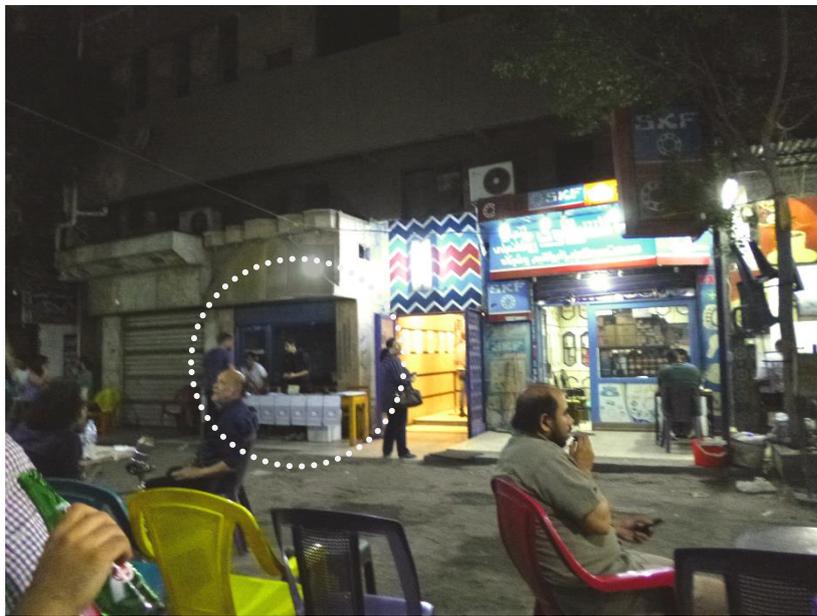


Figure 11: View of the information desk next to the Zawya’s entrance from the passageways, after the audiences entered to attend the film.

Source: By author, May 2017.

Shazli’s model for this project was based on Curzon Cinema⁷⁴ in London- a chain of cinemas based in the United Kingdom, specialized in screening art house films (Zohdi 2018). In addition, Zawya Cinema finds striking resemblances with Cinémathèque de Tanger (CDT), founded 2006 in Tangier, Morocco (Elshahed 2014). While it might be following a global model, yet, designating this phenomenon under the tag of ‘new cultural trend’ (Abaza 2017) tends to overlook their differences.

⁷⁴ <http://faq.curzonhomecinema.com/howitworks>

Other accounts could look at the exclusivity of Zawya as they increase the price of the ticket. Nevertheless, the ability of the project to keep going is actually giving more access to young film makers to screen their work. While it is highly crucial to pay attention to the type of social groups who sustain the means to undertake these forms of *public-making*, nonetheless, dismissing the potential impact of these practices, due to their current globalized profile, relegates their potential power to challenge hegemonic processes of cultural production and by extent the production of space for various kinds of activism. For example, the project *Film my Design*- an initiative that brings young designers together with film makers in an effort by young documentary filmmakers to present and promote local production and the art work produced by the young Egyptian designers. The idea of the initiative was conceived in 2015, implemented in 2017 and on 15-16 Feb. 2016, Zawya became the venue for launching the new platform (El Shennawy 2019a). Thus, providing an opportunity for further groups to make public and share their public address and concern with a wider group of people.

Zawya's efforts were noticed by the authorities and thus the Cairo Opera House's Al Hangar Theater was established as a new platform for independent cinema to promote the work of young Egyptians. This initiative was taken by Mohamed Abu Saida, The head of Cultural Development Fund which is affiliated with the Ministry of Culture. He stated in the 14th issue of Mantiqti newspaper:

“This is considered as an additional window of opportunities similar to Zawya. It focuses particularly on independent movies by young Egyptian film makers, who do not have a place to screen their work.”(Mantiqti 2014a, p.20).

Thus Al Hangar Theater at the Egyptian Opera House established a film screening program with symbolic price (10 EGP), in order to screen three films daily for young Egyptian filmmakers. While Zawya's efforts are clearly liberating to a certain degree, in terms of negotiating the confining structures of state's censorship on the production of culture, gradually breaking free from the global hegemonic systems, offering opportunities for young film makers and simultaneously activating abandoned spaces in Downtown Cairo. Not to mention, on the conceptual level, presenting a model that reveals the key role of urban space within this process. It should also be mentioned that in

that venue documentary films that resonate with Volait's example on 'documentaries that promote the Belle Époque narrative of Downtown' could also be found.

"Belle Époque" [interests] Egyptian film makers catering for a local audience. In a documentary shot in 2011, the young director Sherif El Bendary attempts to capture the soul of downtown Cairo with evident nostalgia for its bygone days (On the road to downtown, 2012)" (Volait 2013, p.19-20)

Hence, the findings of this research equally aim to show that Zawya should not be championed as a liberating initiative in an absolute sense. For, it also - intentionally or unintentionally- might provide channels for circulating nostalgic visions of Downtown that fuels gentrifying trends and obliterates the prevailing reality of Downtown Cairo.

Despite the statement made by the head curator of special programs: "[n]one of us is [a] self identified activist, nor did we ever claim that Zawya was a radical space" (Zohdi 2018, para 38-40). Yet, in order to reach to this clearly defined purpose, as stated by Ayman, Zawya has to actively engage in a multi-dimensional process of power negotiations in order to circulate these concerns and find further solutions, thus, portraying Zawya as *silent activists*. This seemingly passive approach to taking an active role toward the making of a concerned counter-public is particular to the context of Cairo and the Middle East at large (Bayat 2010). Especially when it is framed within the context of Cairo, where instead of supporting cultural diversity, safeguarding freedom of expression and intellectual property rights, the Ministry of culture imposes strict censorship pertaining to the subject-matters of cultural production, in other words, determines what constitutes culture in Egypt (Ghazi 2016).

Following the guidelines of the *Processual* analysis (Pettigrew, A., M., 1997), the table below (Table 2) provides an overview and chronologically outlines the main phases Zawya passed through, the form of public-making they adopted for achieving their goals and the implications of this process on the transformation of the urban site, where Zawya is established.

Table 2: Towards promoting the work of young filmmakers

Source: prepared by Author

Chronological outline	Form of public-making	transformations in relation to urban space	Limitation/Challenge
2009 Attempt to implement the idea (Cinemania)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempt failed and there was still no venue in Egypt that offers this kind of independent cinema. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several old movie theaters in Downtown are hardly frequented and the space is underutilized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial challenge Lack of suitable and affordable venue
Post-2011 Revolution in Egypt	<p><i>Enthusiasm instigated during the events of 2011 and the hope for change</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergence of new initiatives in Downtown Cairo 		
2014 Launching of Zawya In Cinema Odeon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offering (interested) Egyptian audience an alternative than the dominating mainstream commercial movies Providing young film makers- <i>whose work had already been recognized in various film festivals abroad</i>- an opportunity to share their work and screen in Egypt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activation of underused old movie theater in Downtown Cairo Introducing an opportunity for socio-spatial interface between two different social groups and activities. Creating a mutually beneficial relationship with local economic activities in the passageway, where Zawya is located. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial challenge that results in frustration to fully commit to the original programme and risk of survival for the project. In ability to work full-year In ability to gain autonomy in decisions Censorship Limited to a certain interested public, mostly related to film making
2018 Relocation (new venue in Downtown at Cinema Karim)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus more on challenging and questioning the factors that create the idea of an <i>art-house</i> film. <i>“Scrutinize the global system through which films are recognized”</i> (Zohdi 2018, para 38) Attracting a wider public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renovation of an old movie theater Providing spaces for additional activities, beside screening for their public-making Expanding the urban landscape of cultural activism, by temporarily activating various urban spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial challenge that limits the possibility to provide opportunity for more young film makers Censorship

6.3 CASE STUDY 2: TOWNHOUSE GALLERY

Townhouse Gallery is an alternative art gallery that was established in Downtown in 1998, by William Wells and Yasser Gerab. It is located in an alleyway in the popular area of Ma'aruf Street (Figure 12). As mentioned before this area is known for its car repair workshops, garages, other shops specializing in selling car parts, and a number of popular coffee shops (Abaza 2011). The initial objective of Townhouse was to create an independent art space that focuses on visual arts. In the first decade between 1998- 2008 Townhouse was mainly depending on foreign grants. As such, it could break free from the monopoly of the private and state-owned art spaces in Cairo, by offering an alternative space for young artists to explore and join the global art scene. In other words, “[...] targeting young artists, who were producing art work that was not following the typical norms” (William Wells⁷⁵, personal communication, May 13, 2017).



Figure 12: View of the passageway, where Townhouse’s spaces are located
Source: by author, May 2017.

⁷⁵ William Wells a Canadian expat and visual artist. Together with Yasser Gerab they co-founded Townhouse gallery in 1998.

6.3.1 Finding a venue for Townhouse

According to Wells, the process of choosing the location was a challenging one. Perhaps choosing Downtown was not an unusual idea, since it has long been a venue for artists, literati and film makers, or rather the counter-cultural hub of Cairo, as mentioned before. In addition, various private art galleries, such as Atelier Du Caire, Mashrabia Gallery, and Cairo-Berlin art gallery and state owned institutions, such as the Youth Salon (Salon El Shabab) are located in Downtown. Nonetheless, choosing the back alley of a popular area in Downtown was challenging, because artists were concerned whether anyone would come to visit the gallery. As Wells stated, *“The artists told me it is like putting it out into a vacuum, and our work has no relationship with these people”* (personal communication, May 13, 2017).

For Wells, the chosen location was reasonably aligned with the objective of the project, namely, offering a space for young artists, whose work is critical and raises questions about Egypt of the late 90s and the problems that their families and the community surrounding them faced. This was strongly manifested by the features of the area.

” [...] the streets and the conditions of the buildings, the posturing of the people and the vendors, it was so in your face and so unrelated to the representation that was put forward officially, so the artists I am interested in were dealing with those issues, gender issues as much as anything else [...] it was not very typical area, in the sense that you have a lot of informal workers , you have street children, you have the refugee communities that were situated around the area, also you have various churches and NGOs passing through, and there was a lot of drugs, there was even prostitution, it was hidden and sort of being shrouded by these office buildings and main streets, there was an enormous amount of freedom for the people. So yes, it had to be at this place in Downtown” (Wells, W., personal communication, May 13, 2017).

The first space acquired by Townhouse was a 19th century building. The space gradually expanded from one floor to three floors, constituting five apartments that were transformed into a library, an exhibition space, a workspace and studios (Figure 13). In 2000, Townhouse was able to acquire an additional annex across the passageways. In 2003, Townhouse expanded the space by taking over an old warehouse, dubbed *The Factory* (Figure 14) and located next to the annex. In 2006 they transformed another

warehouse situated along the same passageway as a performance space, called *Rawabet* (Arabic for *links*) (Figure 15), which was a storage space (Mantiqti 2014c). Concomitant to the expansion of the space of Townhouse was the evolution of its focus, in terms of accommodating more activities (theater, art performances, films, and symposiums- in addition to the contemporary visual art).



Figure 13: the 19th Century building, where Townhouse acquired three apartments for its studios and art space

Source: Townhouse 2020



Figure 14: View of the Factory space transformed by Townhouse as an art space. Left figure view from outside. Right figure view from inside

Source: by author, May 2017.



Figure 15: View of the Theater space for performing arts
Source: by author, May 2017.

6.3.2 Integrating with the community in Ma'ruf

Doing so, Townhouse was careful to not enforce change in the area by introducing a new group of audience who are interested in contemporary art and thus creating conflict-between the community and the new comers- but rather work with the community and build a mutually beneficial relationship. For example, Townhouse launched the initiative SAWA (Arabic for *together*) that aimed at offering the *factory* space for members of the refugees communities in Egypt and children from the area to participate in art workshops, every Saturday. Similar workshops have been held in Townhouse along the past decade, aiming to strengthen the relationship between the art community and the residents of the area. As Wells stated “[...] *the art community was hungry to actually have a dialogue with this working group, the artists started working with car mechanics, with carpenters and with glass workers*” (Wells, W., personal communication, May 13, 2017). Some of the products from the SAWA program are exhibited and sold in the SAWA gift shop (Figure 16).



Figure 16: view from inside the SAWA gift shop. The gift shop is adjacent to the Factory space.
Source: by author May 2017.

In order to protect the economic survival of the coffee shops near Townhouse, according to Kareem, Townhouse encourages their visitors and staff members to use the existing popular coffee shops in the area (figure 17, 18 and 19). These coffee shops are not only vulnerable because they might have to compete with other westernized coffee shops, but also because of their informal status.

“We try to be sensitive towards our surroundings. This is why, despite the availability of space and the demand of some visitors, we would not open a café that then ruins the business of the baladi (popular) coffee shops in front of us. When people come here, we refer to the El Forn coffee shop and El Taka’iba coffee shop that are across the passageways. We also order tea and coffee every day in the morning for us when we arrive. In addition, this part of Downtown, between Champollion Street and Marouf Street, is originally a car mechanics area; therefore, our exhibitions are intentionally made not too abstract for the community around us, in order to encourage the people from the area to visit us and we always leave our doors open for everyone, since the idea of an art gallery is already intimidating for some people” (Staff member⁷⁶, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

⁷⁶ Interview conducted with a staff member from Human resources at Townhouse on Mai 10, 2017. Interview was conducted in Arabic, translation by Author.

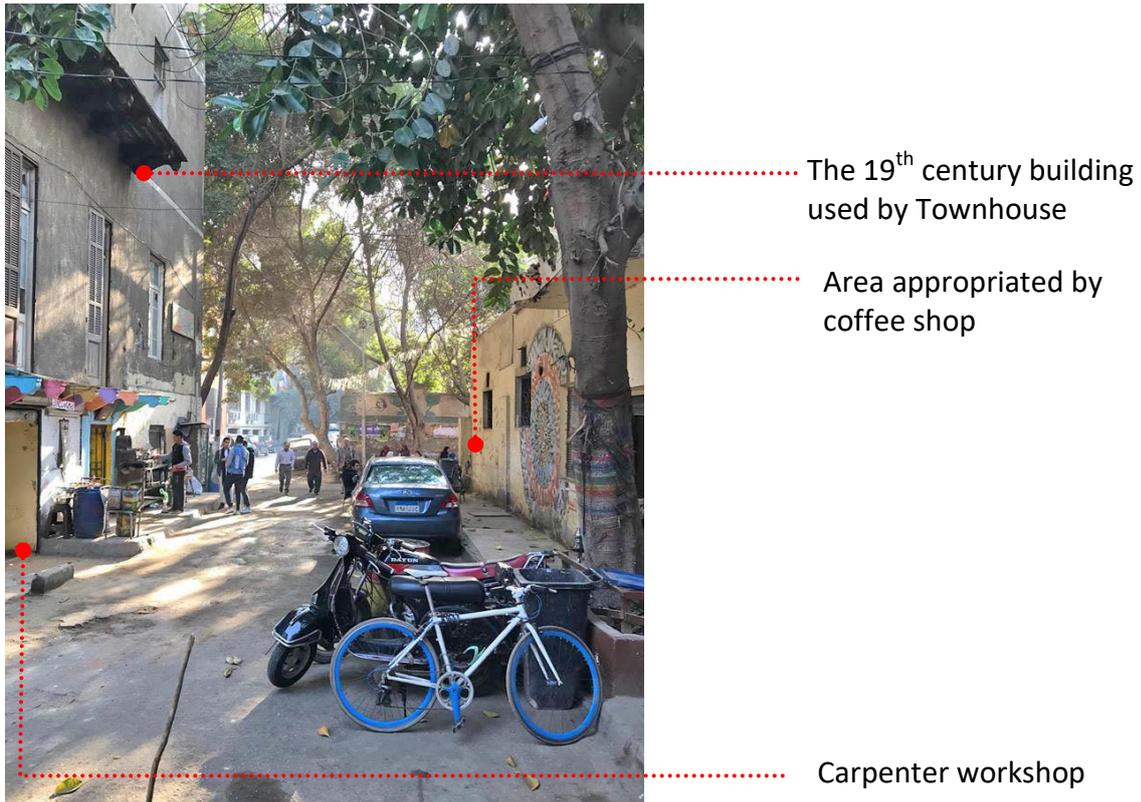


Figure 17: View of the passageways where Townhouse is located. Showing the different uses that share the same passageway.

Source: by author, May 2017.



Figure 18: View of the appropriated space by the coffee shop along a small alley connected to the passageway, where Townhouse is located.

Source: by author, May 2017.

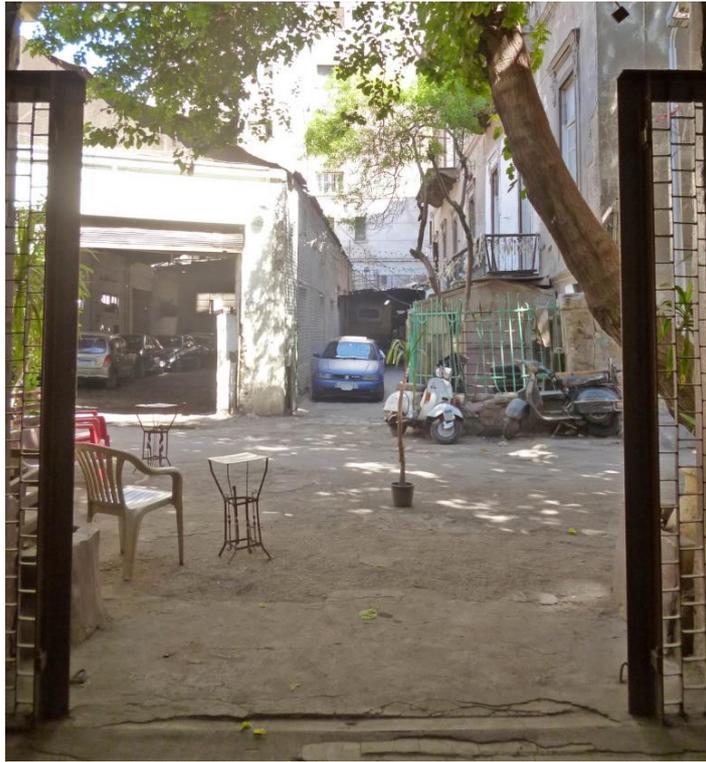


Figure 19: View from the Townhouse factory at the car garage across the passageway.
Source: by author Mai 2017.

6.3.3 Negotiating their survival and growth

Meanwhile, Townhouse has long been seen by the government as a challenge. In its early days, before 2002, “[...]students were not allowed to attend Townhouse events, college made it absolutely clear, no students were allowed to show or attend any exhibition run in Townhouse”(William Wells, personal communication, May 13, 2017). This was mainly due to excluding the public sector from the private art scene in Downtown, where Townhouse and other private galleries in Downtown are key actors. As Winegar argues, the approach of the private sector was premised on the “*colonial framing of Egyptian art as a backward space that could be developed*” (Winegar, J 2006, p, 184). Winegar’s comment suggests that the private art community in Cairo tends to dismiss the kind of local Egyptian art promoted by the public sector, which explains the tension between a private entity as Townhouse and the ministry of culture. During this time Townhouse was under the threat of shutting down. Many art students were concerned and avoided any relation with it, particularly after accusing⁷⁷ them of being “[...] *foreign spies*” (William Wells, personal communication, May 13, 2017).

⁷⁷ by Fuad Selim, director of a state-owned gallery (Golia 2015)

In order to reach out to art students, Townhouse created an independent arts council and in 2000 together with the art community in Downtown they initiated the Nitaq festival; an event that hosts various art activities all over Downtown. Nitaq is considered as Cairo's first independent cooperative arts event, bringing local galleries, shops, and restaurants and exhibitions, performances, concerts and lectures in a variety of space, including abandoned or neglected buildings (Golia 2015). As a result, students started to come and graduates started showing their work in Townhouse but only after they received their graduation. Yet, this festival was banned by the authorities after its second event. Since most of the young artists, who were selected by Western curators to show their work abroad had started in state owned institutions, yet the private sector got the credit for their success (Winegar, J 2006).

Later, Townhouse created PhotoCairo, an annual event that focused on photography. This project led to the birth of *Cairo Image Collective (CIC)*, in 2004. CIC is an initiative focused on photographic arts. In the beginning Townhouse offered CIC the annex as a working space and financially supported them. After establishing their identity, they relocated to another space in Downtown and were registered independently from Townhouse. Similarly, Cairo Hackerspace is another initiative that was born in 2009 by the support of Townhouse. Cairo hacker space is an initiative for experimentation in multiple fields that provides a space and equipment for various groups, including a 3D printer that they made themselves. They started in 2009 in Maadi neighbourhood, then moved in Aug. 2014 to Townhouse and opened in September 2014. They choose Downtown in order to be more accessible by the people (Mantiqti 2014c). They were offered a space to establish their project and build their identity in Townhouse. As Wells describes them “[...] *they are not start-ups that can afford the American University in Cairo (AUC), these start-ups they do not have any money, but they have this passion, they built 3D printers out of scraps*”(Personal communication, May 13, 2017). In 2017, the group of Cairo Hackerspace relocated to another space in Champollion Street. Yet, they are still collaborating with Townhouse on various levels.

Between 2009 and 2010 various controversial projects were carried out.

According to Wells “[...] *people were beginning to become more frustrated with censorship, they were getting frustrated with all sorts of things, and they were pushing the boundaries by going to the street, [...]there was a complacency on the part of the government and the ministry of culture. Possibly because they had*

their internal problems and the artists recognized that they could slowly move to the streets. Their projects were more literal, more direct, and more controversial both within the art world and within the greater context of the city. So there were a lot of arrests and a lot of fights in the streets (Personal communication, May 13, 2017).

Some of the prominent “*Guerilla tactics*” held during this time in Downtown were, *Silence of the Lambs*, in 2009 by the late Amal Kenawy. It took place at the junction between Champollion Street and Mahmoud Basiouny street and in 2010, “*Complaints Choir*⁷⁸ *in Cairo*”, which was held in the passageway in front of Townhouse. Both events led to arrests from the police and resulted in banning Townhouse to carry any art event outside of their private space.

After 2011 many international artists left the country and a lot of Townhouse’s activities were put on hold, the staff decreased to almost the half as well as the foreign funding, which was banned already in 2010. This was also a moment of conflict between the artists and the community of the area. While the artists attempted to seize this revolutionary moment, the community needed stability, resulting in a divide between two groups that have been living and engaging in activities together for the past two decades. “[T]he revolution had an impact on the relationship between the community in this area and the art world, obviously for political differences” (Wells, W., personal communication, May 13, 2017).

After the early years of the revolution 2011, 2012 up till 2013, Townhouse and the community surrounding it were as much disoriented as most people in Downtown and Cairo at large. The conditions got harder when the state regained control over the streets. As elucidate by various interviewees, the laws became more stringent. Censorship became very tight with regard to what is being produced. Music was banned in the street. As a result, “*the very cohesive group that used to join us sort of disappeared*” (Wells, W., personal communication, May 13, 2017).

⁷⁸ Complaints Choir is a community art project that invites people to sing about their complaints in their cities. The idea originated in Birmingham (UK) in 2005 by a Finnish curator and was adopted in various cities around the world.

6.3.3.1 *Confrontations with the authorities*

In 2015, several coffee shops and cultural venues in Downtown, along with Townhouse were raided by the police. “[...] *they occupied every single space that we have, they took our computers, they took our files, they held us for 4-5 hours, and then they sealed the building and closed it. So we were not allowed to work, from December 2015 till late February 2016*” (ibid). Another incident occurred two months later, where a section of the 19th century building of Townhouse collapsed in April 2016. Consequently, the authorities issued a decision to demolish the building. This resulted in a process of confrontation with the residents, shop owner, Townhouse and other volunteers. According to Wells the condition of the building was not assessed by “*a proper surveyor*”. During these negotiations Omar Nagati, co-founder of CLUSTER, referred to the National Organization of Urban Harmony, NOUH⁷⁹, as an attempt to support Townhouse in reaching to an alternative solution than demolishing the whole building, since it represents a unique relationship between the community and the art world that has been built over 17 years. After a year of presenting the issue to the courts, Townhouse won the case against the municipality.

Amid their return in early 2017, after this phase of absence, Townhouse realized the change that occurred in the area and Downtown at large. Wells elucidate:

*“We have suddenly become aware of a **new public**, they were new and they were slowly coming in. Since 2011, the division between us and our community and their slow disappearance created a gap that allowed these people to arrive and their behavior and their attitudes were different, the way they were communicating was totally new to us; a much younger generation. There are no ‘more men than women’ situation [...] they are not political, nobody ever talks politics, but they have this disdain for authority, disdain from being told how to even see something and there is a lot of them, they come with the sense of they have a right”* (personal communication, May 13, 2017).

⁷⁹ As mentioned before, it is a governmental body responsible for heritage conservation in Egypt

The new public Wells refer to, are new comers to Downtown Cairo. They do not necessarily belong to the groups who joined the first days⁸⁰ of the protests in the 25th of January 2011. These were groups that followed the event of 2011 in a later phase (around July 2011) mainly in order to explore certain occurrences (e.g. art performances, singing in the public square and observing other activities undertaken by activists), which eventually led to discovering Downtown for the first time. Despite their awareness on issues of freedom of expressions, they prefer to seek other approaches than engage in direct confrontation with the local authorities. During the aftermaths of the 2011-uprising, this new public started frequenting Downtown Cairo. In addition, they adopt a different approach to art making, which according to Wells, is marked by deployment of “*digital production*” (Spence, R. 2018). The arrival of a new public meant that Townhouse had to reinvent itself in order to support the new *publics* in expressing their ideas. In addition, after the revolution a new dynamic has been created, whereby Townhouse re-accommodated the *Factory* as their main working space, instead of the 19th century building.

In order to survive Townhouse was registered from the beginning, in 1998, as a company that provides cultural services, given the challenges faced by institutions registered as non-profit organizations or NGOs. In 2008, Townhouse established an international foundation in Sweden, whose role is to ensure that all the activities in Egypt are carried out according to the contracts and foreign grants provided from Europe, thus maintaining the flow of foreign funding. Since the prohibition of foreign funding in 2010, according to Wells “[...] *no foreigners work for Townhouse anymore, everybody is Egyptian and now we actually raise a lot more funding in Egypt*” (personal communication, May 13, 2017). Townhouse Rawabet was closed for four month (Till June 2013) due to financial issues which also coincided with the total banning of foreign funding (Mantiqti 2013). While receiving foreign funding played a key role for the survival of Townhouse to run its art spaces, yet, the strict rules of European funding, to ensure its own agendas, entailed frustrating conditions for some artists from “*this side of*

⁸⁰ The first 18 days were the people have set camps in Tahrir Square demanding that the former president Hosni Mubarak step down.

the Mediterranean” (Wells, W., personal communication, May 13, 2017) - Wells referring to Egypt. Thus, the ban of foreign funding and depending on local funding created new interplays and a degree of independency. This however does not mean entire freedom, as Wells explains; the situation is much harder after the revolution. Here, the challenge is twofold; the first is falling under hard censorship conditions and the second is being under the mercy of corporate social responsibility. With regard to the first challenge;

*“[...] everybody has to go through a lot of censorship, in a way that they never had to before, a lot of our groups refuse to submit their lyrics or their scripts to censorship, we were the only independent space that didn’t have a censorship [...] Surviving has become a challenge since 2013 and many initiatives that popped up during the revolution are shut down now. **Everything must be negotiated** and it is a little bit about surviving; what you can achieve within the space that you have, but the degree of optimism that exists here, in this generation, is amazing. I do not think I have experienced it for years”* (Wells, W., personal communication, May 13, 2017).

The second challenge is the neoliberal approaches to the art. On the level of Cairo, Wells argues, there is a great attention paid to these small quiet initiatives both by the private sector and the government. Currently, initiatives are popping up all over the city, in Mohandeseen, Zamalek, Garden city and Maadi. Nonetheless, as Wells explains

“[...] these are initiatives that are very different from Downtown, very different to the sort of things that we are interested in. The government itself is looking in initiatives, a lot of money is going into things in Mohandeseen, a lot of commercial initiatives with neoliberal approaches to the art, now, we can sit and be isolated and say it has nothing to do with us, but it had a lot to do with us” (ibid), given that Townhouse is considered as one of the first independent initiatives in Cairo that is concerned with counter-cultural production.

The changes induced by the revolution have put Townhouse at a junction, where in order to maintain their relevance; they needed to create new strategies to deal with the fast changing landscape in Downtown and Cairo at large. Dealing with these outside forces is extremely challenging,

“This frenzied neoliberalism [,] look at the real estate companies that were offering spaces for free to our initiatives in Downtown, now [referring to post-2011]they are charging them with a ridiculous amount of money, and they claim, ‘we are supporting the arts and culture’. You are no longer offered the flat for free to bring in people and to create a culture of the art. Now, what they charged, nobody can afford it. Because if you do, you would go to Maadi, you would go to Dokki. But here people who afford it, have a totally different view of Downtown [referring to those who have a neoliberal approach to changing Downtown]” (Wells, W., personal communication, May 13, 2017).

In order to compensate for the loss of almost fifty percent of their funding, due to the ban of foreign funding in 2010, Townhouse was forced to find alternative local sources to finance their art projects. Relying on corporate social responsibility, in 2011, Townhouse was able to receive support from SODIC (one of the largest real estate development companies in Egypt). Since 2015, SODIC and Townhouse signed a three years agreement to obtain a free of charge space at the Westtown entertainment hub in the satellite town Sheikh Zayed, located in 6th of October, west of Cairo. The extension of Townhouse’s space (called: Townhouse West) is considered as an attempt to reach to other social groups beyond the relatively closed circles of youth who are familiar with and frequent Downtown (Elsirgany 2015).

Wells emphasizes:

“Now [2017] we are attempting to make sure that those policies of the international and neoliberal approach to the art do not infect everybody. The young individuals that come in, it is really important that we support them, because they are going to be the voice of tomorrow, so they need to know how to deal with broader landscapes, the same way we dealt with the government before- when they said to the art college you cannot go to Townhouse- they will be confronted with the same kind of challenge from the government, the art world, the real-estate with their commercial values” (personal communication, May 13, 2017).

Challenges of the quickly changing Downtown already started. In 2019, Townhouse announced the temporary halt of Rawabet’s activities, due to challenges of extending the rent contract with the owner of the warehouse (El Shennawy 2019).

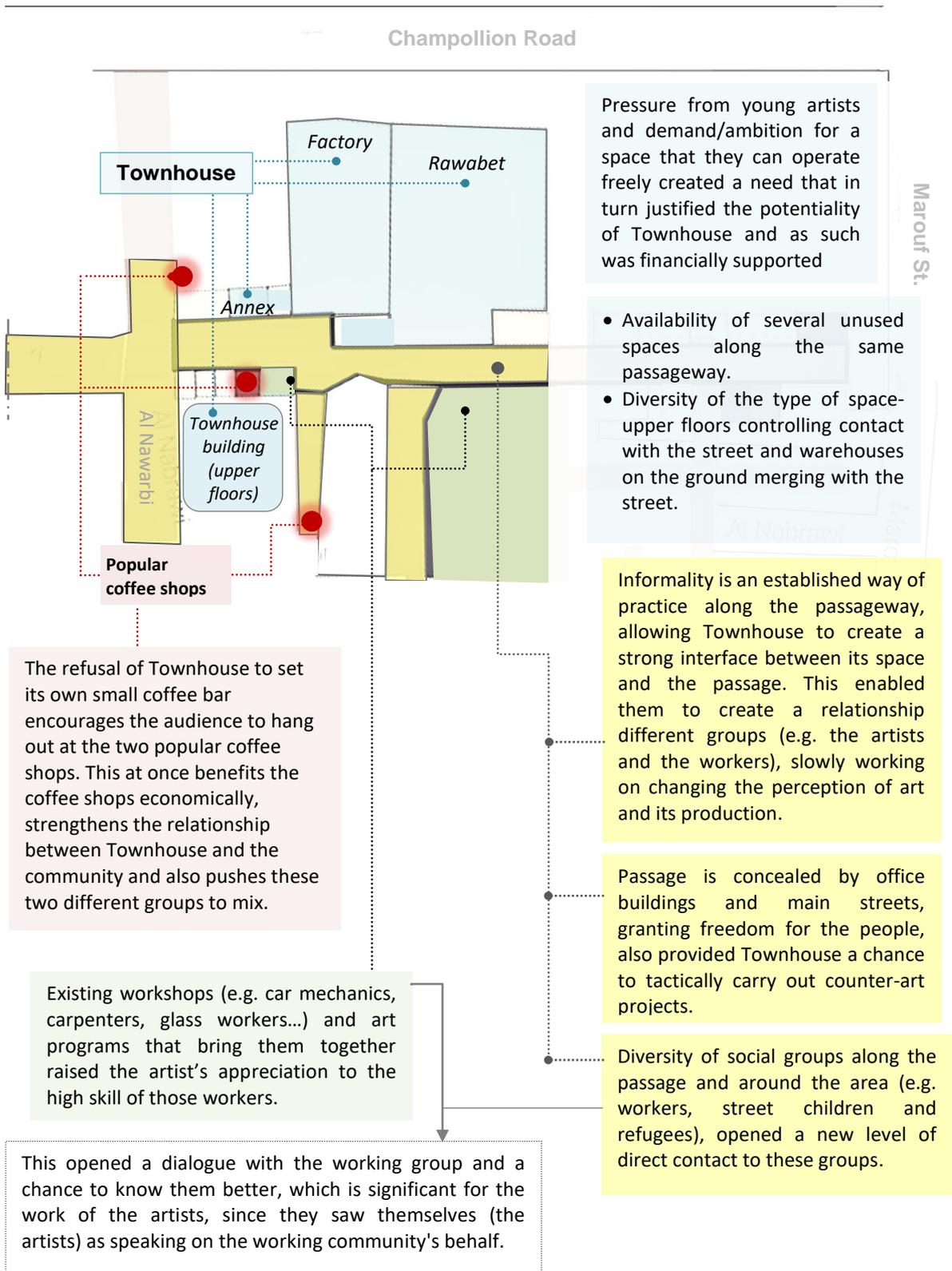
6.3.4 Appropriation of urban spaces for counter-cultural production

The above review, lays out various efforts , where Townhouse have supported individuals to practice their kind of art production as well as collectives who aspire to create and establish various projects, both are attracted by the availability of the space, combined by the freedom to work without restrictions. Therefore, Townhouse has been a *venue for counter-cultural production*, that not only provides physical space, but its relation to other factors nurtured its potentials to provide this support:

- The established history of Downtown, for being the space of the alternative cultural production, as Well's stated "*Downtown, is that area, that evolved into being a place for radical change*"(personal communication, May 13, 2017) and availability of vacant spaces that also belonged to the private entities, who did not happen to frown upon Townhouse's activities.
- Sharing the passageway with different vulnerable social groups and the demand of other artists and groups who practice different forms of art and cultural production which in a way ensured Townhouse's relevancy and in turn the continuation of funding.
- Townhouse made use of the hidden aspects of the space and the relative degree of freedom. It is also an 'insignificant' location that is full of informal activities, which provided a suitable environment to start this alternative project. At once it is not strategic enough to attract investments and simultaneously it enjoys a social mix and diversity of uses, particularly workshops.

The spatial aspect of the potentials, outlined above, is presented in (Map 7) in the next page, following Clerk's technique of *Situational mapping* in order to the map *Relationality* of key heterogeneous elements in a situation (2009). The map highlights the arrangement of several *actents* set together in a certain relationship (Latour,B. 2015a), which follows the methodological suggestions of ANT (Latour, B. 1992). Doing so illustrates the temporal activation of heterogeneous elements, both tangible and non-tangible that plays a key role in the achievements carried out by Townhouse.

Map 7: Relational/ Situational map highlights the relationship between the urban space of Townhouse and other elements, thus presenting affordance for their activities.
Source: base map CLUSTER 2015. Analysis and illustration prepared by author



Their expansion and growth is directly linked to the expansion of their venue and acquiring more space. Their venues did not only support them run their own counter-cultural programs, but also provided opportunities for other groups (*publics*), including a venue to grow and form their identity. Thus, the potentials and affordance of this urban space served the making of multiple publics. Along the process of promoting alternative processes of cultural production, Townhouse has become a venue for various collectives to make public (e.g. Rawabet theater, CIC at the Annex and Hacker space at the roof of the building). The implication of this process resulted in spatial expansion beyond the Townhouse complex space, where these collectives became independent and moved to new locations in Downtown, further activating spaces for independent cultural production.

Being part of the community and part of their everyday lives provided a certain access for the artists that other type of spaces might not be able to offer, namely a closer look and real experience of the subaltern groups who are often the subject of the art being produced. In addition, the field observation shows that the popular and the alternative groups are relatively divided, they only mix in two cases, when the alternative group is having an activity in Townhouse and so they frequent the coffee shops, or the popular group is taking part in one of the community art projects in Townhouse, otherwise, there is not many opportunities that would enhance their interaction. Informality, allowed them also to bring their work to the street; to the community that was intimidated from this contemporary art space. It allowed this kind of interface to take place.

In this regard, while *Al Ismaelia for Real Estate Investment Company* argue that some activities such as small-scale workshops, e.g. metal workshops, should be relocated elsewhere in order to make space for cafes, restaurants and other cultural venues that are most likely to bring customers and revitalize the neighbourhood (Berger M.J. 2014; Kemper 2011; Shawky 2010). Townhouse establishes art programs that bring these working communities with the art community, thus, attempting to protect the social and functional diversity of the area. Consequently, mutual stigmatization from both groups fell in the face of real life experience and engaging in co-working programs, resulting instead in a symbiotic relationship.

This however, was not free from struggles, since their work is anti-hegemonic. They are registered as a company in order to lift the burden that comes with being registered as a non-profit. Although this is a predominantly informal area, with a lot of other informal coffee shops, that are definitely not following the "regulations", yet, Townhouse became the one to face this challenge for provoking the government with its activities. As a result, the government used the narrative of “not following the regulation” during the raid of 2015.

- **Significance of this case study**

Looking at the case of Townhouse as a venue for counter-cultural production provides certain validation to the findings of the case of Zawya, in relation to the way potentials of urban space or rather the relation of heterogeneous elements (e.g. collective groups, different spatial arrangements, private ownership of workshops and screening halls, established self-governing systems...etc., symbolic significance of various locations) presented an affordance for their activities. Nonetheless, Townhouse as a case study provides yet another significant aspect.

On one hand, the demand for such a space for exploration and experimentation and relative freedom resulted in the conversion of Townhouse that had started as a space specialized in visual arts into a space that combines various forms of art, including, theater, dance, film and photography. Which also indicate the lack of venues in Cairo that not only provide the space but also the support in order to be critical. This matter becomes pressing when it is situated in relation to accounts that criticize the approach of the government, where the Ministry of culture invest in the so-called “*high culture*”, opening various cultural palaces and theaters, monopolizing the opportunities and spaces for cultural production, yet unable to deliver or support innovative and creative art and cultural production. (Metwaly, A. 2018)

On the other hand, it has been considered as a space catering for a globalized international group, as Ryzova denotes, “[...] *while partly liberating especially younger Egyptian artists from the confines of state institutions and the corruption and patronage of the official art world, as well as offering an outlet for new talents, Townhouse has also*

introduced a wholly new set of hierarchies of exclusion” (2013, para 19). Similarly, Winegar referring to the private art spaces argues that despite playing a key role in countering “*the stagnancy of the government, it was anything but benign*” (2006, p.181). The establishment of these new private spaces, meant the formation of new hierarchal relations, while overcoming the dominance of public sector, yet it had exposed the young artists to a neocolonial hierarchy that privileged western values (2006).

While struggles over the art is beyond the scope of this research, yet the previous accounts reveal the conflicts between various *publics* in this process, each construct their own narrative about art and cultural production in Egypt. The result is exclusions built on, either, colonial logics that tend to articulate non-western art productions, in need of Western salvation, or, anticolonial nationalism that attempts to save Egyptian authenticity by focusing on folkloric styles of art. Other accounts avoid dualism and attempt to read the reactions of young artists as active engagement with the global cultural economy. This brings us to the significant impact of the revolution revealed by this case.

One of the remarkable differences between before and after the revolution with regard to the “*culture of the arts*” or cultural production in general, in reference to Wells’s interview, is that while an international art community would be aware of the art activities and projects, silently, taking place in Cairo before the revolution of 2011, for example, *The Silence Of The Lambs* in 2009 and *The Complaint Choir* in 2010 and many other art projects and guerrilla tactics, yet, it was not prominent among ordinary people in Cairo. This constellation has changed after the revolution in 2011, where massive movements of expression have been unleashed and became visible, benefiting a different social group of young people in Cairo and simultaneously forcing Townhouse to break out of the exclusive circle of international artists.

Notwithstanding the undeniable influence that was induced by Townhouse in the last two decades, yet the revolution forced Townhouse to restructure its program and network. And seek new power relationships and negotiations. Currently a different set of conditions provide Townhouse with the power to survive, most prominently resorting to the *power of publicity* by inviting a wider public that does not seem threatening. Also their concerns and ambitions are now different, for they work on multiple horizons,

among which is a fusion of different activities that aims at observing, documenting and publishing, in other words, *public-making* of their experience and concerns. After the revolution, independent art spaces are pushed by the current circumstances to deal with - almost only- young motivated local groups. This in turn is redefining a new relationship between ordinary people and artists. Not to mention collaborating with SODIC contributes to current debates in media about the role of social corporate responsibility as an innovative way to support cultural production.

Following the guidelines of the *Processual* analysis (Pettigrew, A., M., 1997), the table below (Table 3) provides an overview and chronologically outlines the main phases Townhouse passed through, the form of public-making they adopted for achieving their goals and the implications of this process on the transformation of the urban site where Townhouse is established.

Table 3: Towards promoting a critical approach to producing art

Source: prepared by author

Chronological outline	Form of public-making	Transformations in relation to urban space	Limitation/Challenge
1998 Establishing Townhouse Gallery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> break free from the monopoly of the private and state-owned art spaces in Cairo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transforming a 19th century building into an art space Offering an alternative space for young artists to explore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skepticism from the artists side regarding the chosen location
2000-2010 Attempt to implement the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Townhouse created an independent arts council Introducing and opening communication channels between Egyptian art graduates and the international art community Supporting the initiation of other processes of public-making (e.g. in 2004, CIC Cairo image collective and in 2009 Cairo Hackerspace) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long term appropriation of three rented spaces (storages and warehouses) Offering space for community members to explore art production and integrate with the art community Temporary activation of various spaces in Downtown by initiating the first art festival in DT (Nitaq) Strong interface between the art space and the passage way changing perception towards the use of space by collectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students were not allowed to show or attend any exhibition in Townhouse Under the threat of being shut down by the authorities (2009-2010 saw various arrests) Relying on foreign funding meant limited space of freedom and constraining requirements from the funding source Limited to certain art group closely linked to the international scene
Post-2011 Revolution in Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Reconfiguration of Townhouse and its activities</i> <i>political differences affected the relationship between the community in the area and the art groups</i> 		
2014 Struggles with the authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overcoming two consecutive confrontations with the authorities. During these negotiations they renewed their ties with the local community and joined the supporting network of emerging initiatives in Downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporary stagnation in the production of spaces for counter-culture/art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Censorship became very tight with regard to what is being produced Banning foreign fund meant loss of 50% of Townhouse's funding sources
2017 Townhouse had to reinvent itself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The changes resulted in the creation of a gap that allowed the arrival of a new kind of public, marked by their non-political insurgence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reactivation of Townhouse spaces Readapting to new mechanisms for surviving (relying on private space) Expanding in other space in Cairo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neoliberal approaches to the art Regulations and censorship became relatively stricter after the revolution, discouraging small groups to go through the long process of receiving permissions

6.4 CASE STUDY 3: CLUSTER

CLUSTER (An acronym for: *Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research*) was established in 2011 by the architect Omar Nagati and the artist Beth Stryker. It is one of the leading initiatives that are concerned with urban policy change. It is a group of non-governmental professionals (mainly Architects, artists and urban designers), who focus on promoting a counter-approach to urban development than the dominating top-down one, by exploring other possibilities for bottom-up urban interventions;

“[...] being part of the revolution was creating a platform for an alternative mode of practice; or experimenting” (Personal communication, November 1, 2016)⁸¹.

Doing so CLUSTER relies on a variety of small-scale projects; from organizing conference and symposiums, issuing publications and offering student training programs to conducting urban research and surveys and incorporating various pilot projects within the framework of their research. The following section will first outline some projects carried out by CLUSTER and simultaneously analyze the relationship between their motive, the approach and the urban potentials displayed for their motive.

6.4.1 Project 1: CUIP Cairo Urban Initiatives Platform (Online Platform)

In order to capture and explore the emergence of alternatives, document it and further expand it among a wider network, CLUSTER launched “*Cairo Urban Initiatives Platform*⁸²”, in 2012. An online platform that provides a hyper-map (Figure 20) of Cairo introducing the location and profile of various initiatives, related to art, culture, advocacy, media and urbanism that sprung up after the revolution in 2011, as a tool for all initiatives and other interested citizens to learn about each other and coordinate activities. CLUSTER wanted to “*[...] capture this moment in flux*” (O.Nagati, personal communication, November 1, 2016⁸³). This according to Nagati was

⁸¹ The original language of the interview is Arabic. English translation by the Author

⁸² See: <https://cuip.clustermappinginitiative.org/index.php>

⁸³ Original language of interview is Arabic, translation by the Author)

a response to the excitement and motivation of the people to contribute to this moment of change during the revolution and shortly after. It was remarkable to see how the revolution “[...] opened a possibility and room for alternative ways to use the public space” (Curry Stone Foundation, 2018)⁸⁴.

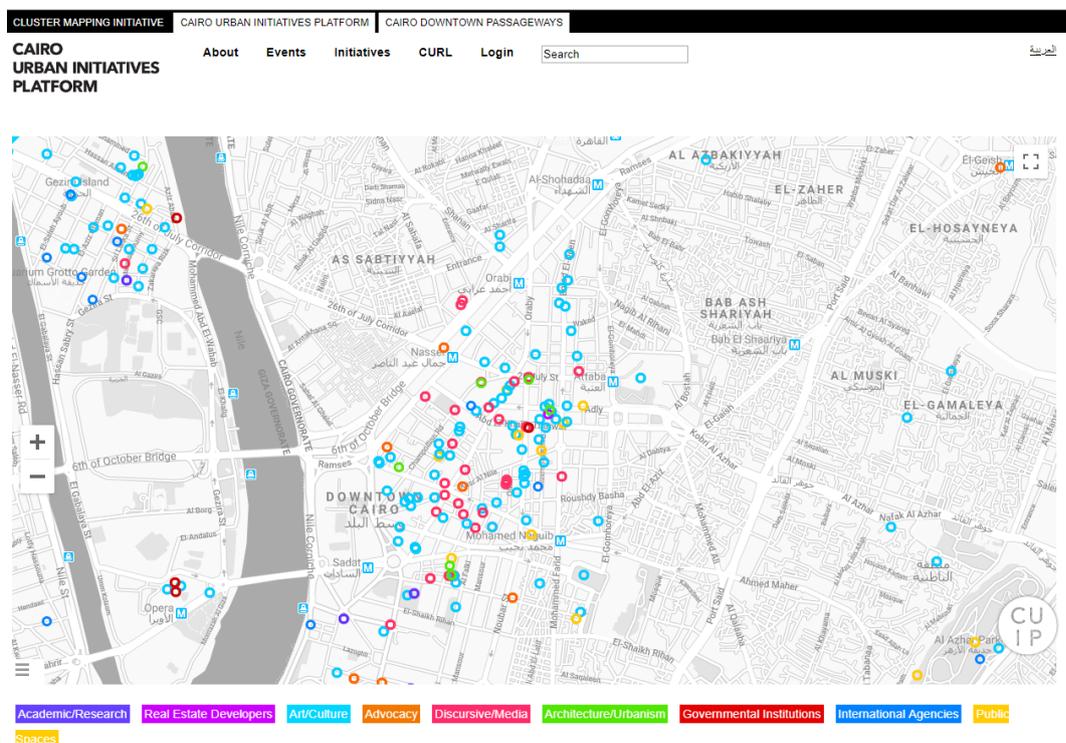


Figure 20: Online hyper-map for Cairo Urban Initiatives
Source: CLUSTER 2013, retrieved from <https://www.cuipcairo.org/>

CLUSTER’s hypothesis that this moment will terminate once the state regains power and control over public space and in turn might push some of the initiatives underground or even shut down was a decisive factor to undertake this project. The project started with around 30 initiatives (particularly those started after 2011). Later, other already existing initiatives, who played an active role (such as: El mawred el thakafi, Townhous art gallery, Cimatheque, CIC, and Takween) were added to the platform. Further relevant governmental institutions, such as (NOUH) the National Organization for Urban Harmony, in addition to international agencies and donors, who played a supporting role

⁸⁴ Quote retrieved from : <https://currystonefoundation.org/practice/cluster-cairo/>, based on an audio interview with architect and urban planner Omar Nagati and artist and designer Beth Stryker (founders of CLUSTER) conducted by Emiliano Gandolfi and Eric Cesal in 2018

as non-governmental institutions during this period, were added to the platform as well. This cumulative process of building the platform shifted into constructing a bigger network among various stakeholders reaching to over 300 members (Nagati, O., personal communication, November 1, 2016). The platform is also thematically structured under a number of topics- environmental, heritage, transportation, housing, education...etc. According to Nagati, since 2016 the platform has been expanding on the regional and international levels as well. Currently it covers initiatives in the city of Alexandria, Egypt, and Amman, Jordan (Personal communication, November 1, 2016). Nagati further emphasized that, “[*CLUSTER*] never invited anybody or excluded anybody. Now [referring to the time of the interview in 2016] anyone who is interested sends us and we give them the password to list themselves” (Personal communication, November 1, 2016).

6.4.2 Project 2: “Artists as Urban Catalysts in Downtown Cairo” (Conferences, Panel discussions and publications)

In light of the government’s heritage conservation plans that started since the 1990s and continued with a series of pilot projects on the span of two decades focusing on Khedival Cairo, the events of 2011 in Cairo instigated a process of revisiting the established plans to renovate Downtown Cairo. As part of alternatively re-imagining Downtown and as a result of the multifaceted independent art and cultural initiatives that were sprung up in Downtown post-2011, CLUSTER organized a panel discussion under the title “*Artists as Urban Catalysts*”⁸⁵ in December 2012, at the Goethe Institute in Cairo with support from the Ford Foundation and the Goethe Institute. The discussion brought art and cultural curators in Downtown (e.g. Townhouse gallery, Cairo image collective (CIC) and Cimateque) together with representatives of Al-Ismaelia for Real Estate Investment Company and the American University in Cairo. This panel was held again as part of the conference “*Creative Cities: Re-framing Downtown*”⁸⁶ co-organized by CLUSTER and the American University in Cairo (AUC) in 2015 at the AUC’s Downtown campus. The debates shed the light on a wide range of issues concerning the role of art and culture in

⁸⁵ <https://passageways.clustermappinginitiative.org/en/events/artists-urban-catalysts>

⁸⁶ Conference proceedings “*Creative Cities: Re-framing Downtown Cairo*” are published at https://issuu.com/clustercairo/docs/creative_cities_reframing_downtown_ on Dec 28, 2016

revitalizing Downtown, the potentials of abandoned urban spaces in Downtown in providing venues for art and culture, questioning whether if in Downtown Cairo the support of real-estate developers is a “*co-opting*” strategy of revolutionary art for the neoliberal capitalist scheme of Cairo 2050 (Abaza 2013), as some observers framed it, while others argued that in the context of Downtown gentrification might be framed differently than other cities such as New York and Berlin (CLUSTER 2016).

- ***Pilot project: Hassan khan Exhibition***

Meanwhile, CLUSTER partnered with D-CAF (Downtown Contemporary Art Festival) in a project that aimed at exploring alternative ways to use abandoned urban spaces in Downtown for art and culture uses (Nagati, O. , personal communication, November 1, 2016). CLUSTER chose the former Kodak storage space (Figure 21) in Kodak passageway that has been vacant for around 10-12 years. It is owned by Al-Ismaelia for Real Estate Investment Company, who is considering changing the space into a food-court (ibid). Since the space was still neglected and unutilized CLUSTER and D-CAF saw a potential to transform it into “*a pop-up gallery space*” (CLUSTER 2014). After negotiating with Al- Ismailia Company to use the space, an art exhibition, “*Hassan khan⁸⁷ Exhibition*”, was held in April 2014 for three weeks (Nagati, O., personal communication, November 1, 2016). The project was produced by Orient Productions and D-CAF (CLUSTER 2014). The storefront of four rooms located along the passageways exhibited Hassan khan’s work since the mid-90s. Although CLUSTER did some renovation work on the old storage space, their main goal was to explore the impact of this alternative temporary use on the passageway and its users Nagati, O., personal communication, November 1, 2016). Nagati explicated, “*Downtown Cairo has a lot of neglected spaces that carries these potentials. But many people are reluctant and they don’t want to do anything in them*” (ibid).

⁸⁷ Hassan khan is a multi-media artist, who employs sound and video installations, visual art, sculptures and texts in his composite art work (Mousse Magazine 2014).



Figure 21: The storage space during the Hassan Khan exhibition

Source: CLUSTER 2014

Directly across the passageway there is an old synagogue, which explains the 24-7 security police on both sides of the passageway. Not only that public gathering is not allowed particularly in Downtown, but also choosing such as highly securitized location brings bigger challenges. Yet the fact that the exhibition was in privately owned space, it provided a certain degree of autonomy. Although people did gather in the public passageway, yet this was not seen as a direct confrontation or disobedience to the state's rules of conduct (Figure 22).



Figure 22: Passageway in front of Kodak storage space, during the exhibition, showing the visitors gathered

Source: CLUSTER 2014

6.4.3 Project 3: Downtown passageway mapping project

Captured by the uniqueness of Downtown's urban typology and the continuous interface between informal and formal, CLUSTER has been, simultaneously, working on a second survey project (*Downtown passageway mapping project*⁸⁸) that explored the urban life of the passageways in order to reveal the latent potentials for urban change. As Nagati explains: " [...] it was a question of how to re-frame and re-imagine the city- Downtown as a beginning- through those passageways, and how could they become an alternative for culture, greenways, bikeways, book fairs...etc. " (Personal communication, November 1, 2016). CLUSTER realized that Cairo was reduced to Tahrir square, during the revolution in 2011, yet in their view "[...] there were a lot of 'Tahrirs' that are worthy of studying"⁸⁹ (Nagati, O., personal communication, November 1, 2016) - an observation shared by many authors who criticized the attention of international media solely on Tahrir square as a symbol of the revolution (Sadnicki 2016).

Given their location- located in an apartment building in Downtown Cairo- CLUSTER deals with urban issues in Downtown on a daily basis from the point of view of a city-dweller. For Nagati, there was a lot of negotiation of conflicts going on in Downtown. Revolving around various issues, including street vending, parking, and the use of the passageway, which, for Nagati, reflected a micro-space of contestations between different groups, each empowered by the spirit of the revolution-as Nagati puts it "[...] the city was boiling" (Personal communication, November 1, 2016). Yet the mapping project revealed how these inner spaces have a degree of tolerance and room for coexistence that were not in the "*public presence*"(ibid).

The mapping project was also integrated within the teaching program of the architectural department in MSA (October University of Modern Sciences and Arts). The students built a portable scale model of the area and divided it into various Super-Blocks. Each group carried out the mapping of one Super-Block. The process included interviews with various shop-owners and users in order to understand the urban history of the

⁸⁸ <http://passageways.clustermappinginitiative.org/>

⁸⁹ This notion was also shared by Nagati in (Elhady , Nabeel and Nagati, Omar 2014)

passageways. Gradually the project grew on the span of 2-3 years and more financial support was acquired. The passages were categorized based on different typologies- formally, informally and historically pedestrianized. The mapping focused on two aspects, the morphology and genealogy of the passages (Figure 23). This project was shared in the form of an online platform⁹⁰ as well as a printed publication⁹¹.

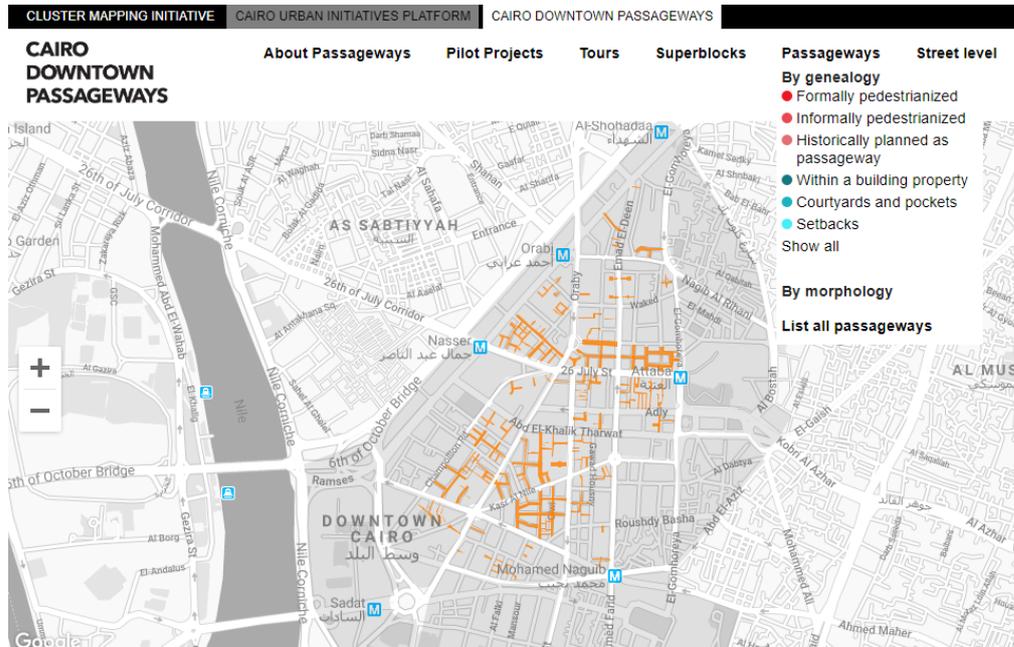


Figure 23: Online data base of Cairo Downtown passageways
Source: CLUSTER 2015

The reason behind the morphological aspects of the passages, as Nagati articulates

“[...] was about this interface, this in-between space. It is not only a physical container or a materialistic space between the buildings- which it is- but it is also beyond that. We consider it a space of mediation and negotiation between public and private, between formal architecture and informal vernacular and the reality on the ground.” (Personal communication, November 1, 2016).

While the second aspect predicated on the metaphorical dimension. For Nagati the passageways represented *“[...] a space of transition or liminality in the metaphorical*

⁹⁰ <http://passageways.clustermappinginitiative.org/>

⁹¹ CLUSTER (2015) Cairo Downtown Passageways: Walking Tour. CLUSTER. Printed in Cairo. ISBN 978-0-692-56012-9.

sense [...], since we are in a phase of transition from a regime that fell and another one that is in the process of formation. Thus, it was considered as a good tool to understand the city on a micro level” (Personal communication, November 1, 2016).

- ***Pilot project: Renovation of Kodak and Philips passageways in Downtown Cairo***

As part of the Downtown passageway mapping project, CLUSTER decided to test their hypothesis regarding the potentiality of re-imagining Downtown’s renovation plans through the passageways, which entailed choosing one or two passages for renovation as a pilot project. Based on the data collected in the surveys, *Kodak and Philips passageways* were chosen (Figure 24 and 25). The passageways are located at the northern end of Downtown. As Nagati describes, these passageways “*[...] represented two strategic prototypes: mono-use verses mixed use, corporate verses popular, visible verses concealed, wide passage verses narrow alley, formally regulated verses informal interventions*” (personal communication, November 1, 2016). CLUSTER approached the government, the local partners and private business, in order to promote a participatory process in the decision-making of the project (ibid).



Figure 24: Kodak passageway before renovation
Source: CLUSTER 2015



Figure 25: view of Philips passageway before renovation revealing the retrogressive state of the space.
Source: CLUSTER 2015.

During the implementation of the project, CLUSTER was involved in a process of “*urban diplomacy*”, as Nagati denoted (ibid). Negotiations took place on various levels. On the level of the shop owners, in order to meet their conflicting demands and gain their trust. The renovation of each passageway (Kodak and Philips) presented a different challenge and required a different way of negotiations. On the level of the government, CLUSTER resorted to both strategic and tactical approaches. In order to acquire the government’s permits, CLUSTER’s approach predicated on establishing a common ground. They brought various factors to the front of the negotiation vis-à-vis the timing of the project, since it is a moment of transition for the new government after the revolution, which encouraged them to collaborate in a new project that would establish a new relationship with the people. In addition, the project did not pose financial burdens on the government, since it was supported by the Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute, DEDI (Nagati, O., personal communication, November 1, 2016).

In terms of the design, some elements were rejected, since they promote using the Kodak passageway (Figure 26) for gathering and sitting. Located on Adli Street in front of the northern side of the Kodak passageway, is the Sha'ar Hashamayim Synagogue. As such, this location is one of the highly securitized locations in Downtown, which explains the 24-hours security police sitting at the northern corners of Kodak passageways. In order to negotiate the goals of the project- pertaining to enhancing the use of public space- with the government, CLUSTER resorted to design solutions that avoid overtly defying the government's demands and simultaneously retained the design objectives. For Nagati, "being transparent provides a kind of credibility that facilitates the challenge of working within a bureaucratic system" (personal communication, November 1, 2016).



Figure 26: Kodak passageway after renovation and the Exhibition space on the right side.
Source: by author, Mai 2017.

Meanwhile on the level of the private sector, CLUSTER employed a different form of power negotiations. of *Al Ismaelia* Company (*Al-Ismaelia* for Real Estate Investment Company), the owners of two buildings where the passageways are, were against the renovation of Philips passageway, since they had a different agenda regarding the future of this passageway and renovating it would delay their plans, if not terminate it . *Al Ismaelia* Company, however, had great interest in the renovation of Kodak passageway.

As such, CLUSTER employed this opportunity in order to work on Philips passageway as well.



Figure 27: Philips passageway after introducing entry marquee and improving the lighting
Source: CLUSTER 2015

In January 2015, CLUSTER organized an event as a small opening ceremony (Figure 28) of the renovated passageways. The ceremony hosted all stakeholders (e.g. members of the government, shop owners and residents, CLUSTER team, *Al Ismaelia* Company and the Danish ambassador) involved in the project including other guests. The ceremony took place in Kodak passageway; it held an exhibition showing all the project's phases from inception, discussions, design to implementation. Various initiatives in Downtown contributed in the organization of the event; e.g. *Cimateque* organized the screenings of the exhibition, *Eish and Malh* organized the catering, Nada Al-Shazli and other musicians prepared a small music session. CLUSTER's aim was to hold an event that involved a variety of artistic and cultural activities in the public space during the presence of the government, thus, introducing a non-normative use (personal communication, November 1, 2016). Nagati describes, it was a kind of "*subversive tactic*"; taking advantage of the government's presence in order to demonstrate the possibility of this type of use (*ibid*).



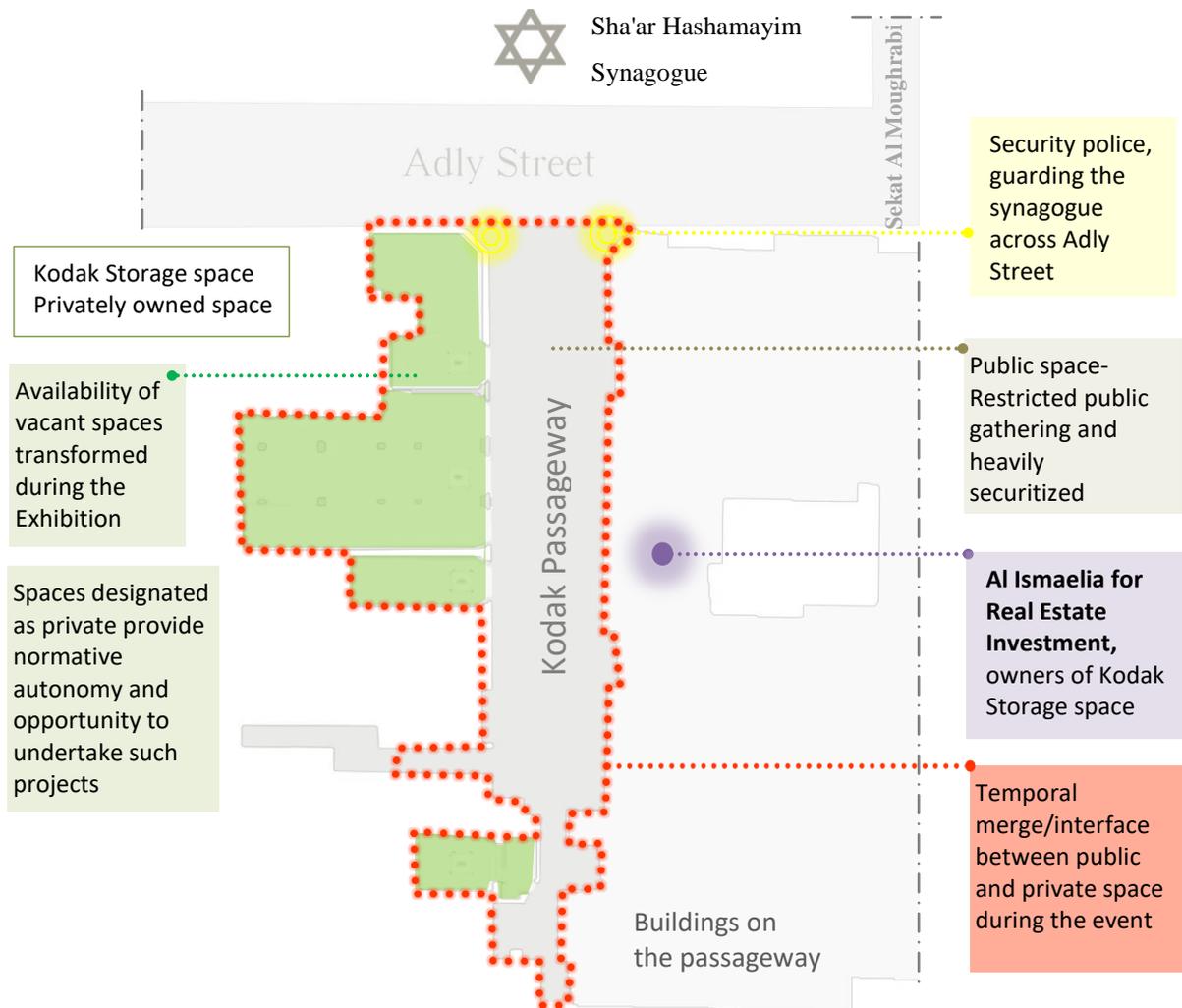
Figure 28: Kodak passageway after renovation, during the opening ceremony.
Source: CLUSTER 2015.

6.4.4 Urban interventions for countering established mode of practice

The analysis shows that along this process of public-making, CLUSTER combined an assembly of projects that crystalized in various Material forms (Latour,B. 2015a). Although these forms of public address shares the same concern, the approach was interchanging, strategically, by expanding their horizon, and invite more public to the debate and simultaneously dive deeper to test their ideas on the ground, tactically making use of their know-how, negotiation skills and network. Some focused on opening new horizons for communication and others focused on testing alternative modes of practice. The example of the pop-up gallery the exploited the private ownership of the exhibition space were other normative rules apply, thus gatherings were possible, which unveils how the power to excluding the government- power of privacy- enabled them to achieve their goals. Following the methodological suggestions of ANT, Clerk's technique of *Situational mapping* is employed, in order to the map *Relationality* of key heterogeneous elements (2009), (Map 8 below) in the Hassan Khan exhibition.

Map 8 : mapping the situational configuration of Kodak passageway during the Hassan Khan exhibition as a pop-up gallery

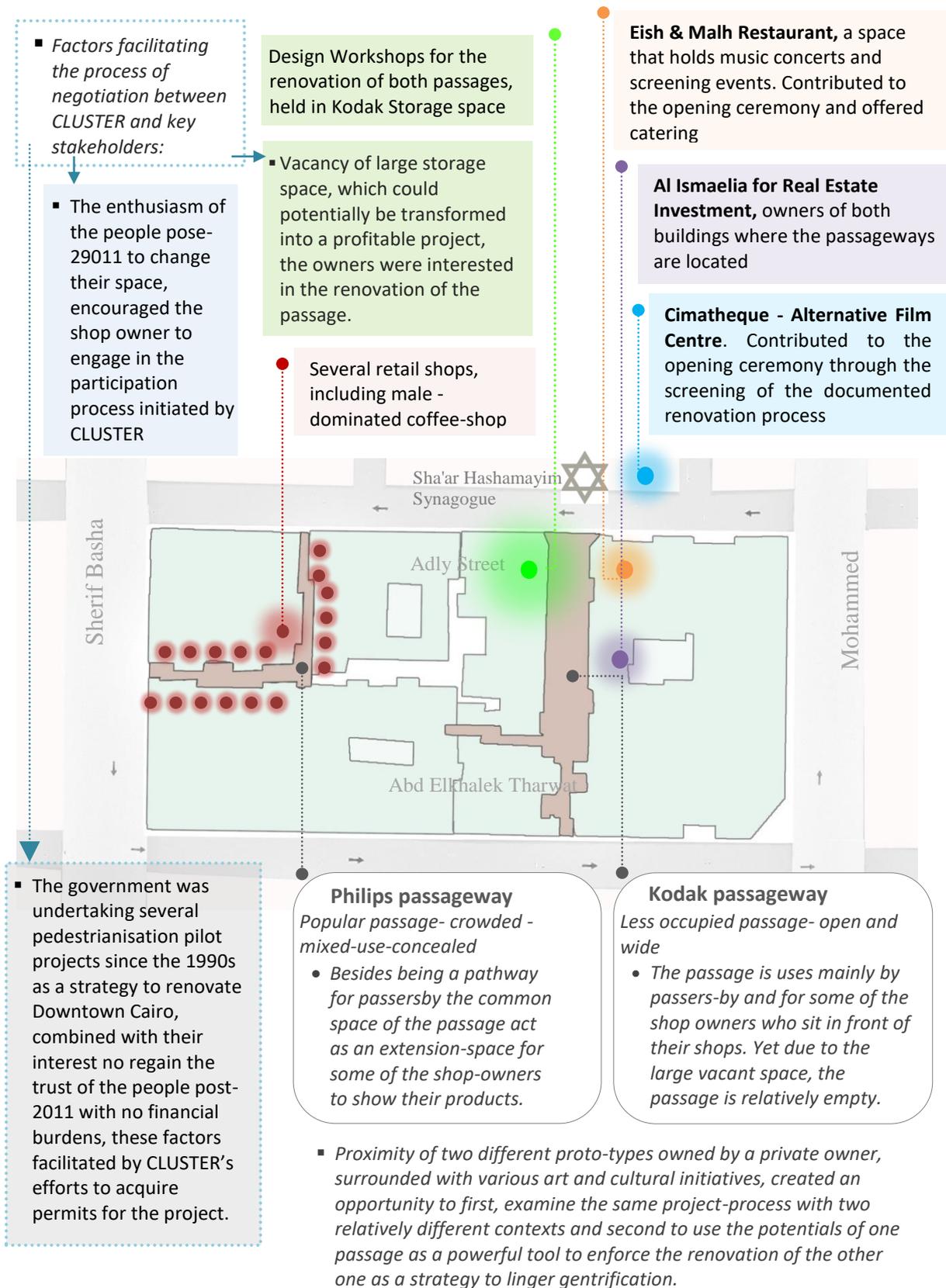
Source: Base map from CLUSTER 2014 and Google Earth 2020. Comments and illustration by Author



Meanwhile, in the other Situational map of the renovation of the passageways (Map 9) reveals the way different forms of power were deployed for the achievement of the project. While authoritarian the system is not devoid of cracks, their need to become popular as a new regime, establish stability and peace with the people particularly after the revolution and lack of financial capacity, provided CLUSTER with an opportunity to acquire permits. Here including the government as a vital actor in the process denotes to the use of publicity as a form of power. In this process Downtown has become (*object of public debate*), where the mode of its production and appropriation has been challenged to a certain extent which was enabled by its potentials both on the symbolic and physical level.

Map 9: mapping the situational configuration of Kodak passageway during the renovation

Source: Base map from CLUSTER 2014 and Google Earth 2020, editing, comments and illustration by Author



The above analytical review articulated the contingency between each project and the context. Urban space in this form of *public address* was at once a *venue for their address* and predominantly an *object of public debate* (Iveson 2007). While enhancing a participatory approach to urban renovation projects, introducing an alternative temporary-use and establishing an online platform might not be a new or revolutionary practice, yet, the contingency between their action and its context renders them as counter-projects. In other words “[...] *situating the act in relation to its circumstances*” (Certeau 1984 [1980], p.33) reveals the *reflexivity* (Benhabib, 1992) of their public action. In addition, when we look at their projects from a holistic point of view, combined together as an assembly of projects that belongs to the same concern (or *public address*), it becomes clear that their practices, incrementally provide opportunities to challenge and change existing modes of production, this socio-spatial platform they created, have become a venue for negotiation of policies and critical focus on micro-scale spatial tactics.

The appropriation of available opportunities, both at the symbolic and spatial levels, played key role in their *public-making*. The restricted use of public space and high securitization, was experienced during the site-observations, it shows how difficult it is to use the Kodak passageway, organizing events and public gatherings is even more challenging in Downtown than other districts in Cairo. Relying on the availability of vacant spaces that are designated as “private”, combined with the interest of Al-Ismaelia for Real Estate Investment Company presented an opportunity to undertake both pilot projects. One introduced non-normative ways to use the urban space and the other adopting non-conventional approach to renovating the passage; each imposed a challenge to dominating powers in different ways. Since they focus on approaching urban issues from non-normative perspectives while using their professional know-how and employ the tools they develop for enhancing an alternative mode of practice, CLUSTER’s work could be framed as a form of *professional activism* (Al-Harithy, H. 2015). Their work mainly aims at changing the way we discuss and think of urban space making and attempt to open a dialogue between different stakeholders.

Following the guidelines of the *Processual* analysis (Pettigrew, A., M., 1997), the table below (Table 4) is an overview and a synthesis of the form of *public-making* adopted in each of the previously analyzed projects and their impact on transforming urban space, including the challenges and limitations faced during its implementation. It chronologically outlines the process by which CLUSTER established its goals and gradually undertook various activities to make their concern-promoting an alternative approach to urban development- public.

Table 4: Towards promoting an alternative approach to urban development

Source: by author

Chronological outline	Form of public-making	transformations in relation to urban space	Limitation/Challenge
Before-2011			
Ambitions and intentions existed before 2011 but not the possibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> worked on profitable projects with limited opportunity to test new approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in the built environment was driven by the government's renovation plans and paralleled by small-scale appropriations by the informal sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> space of maneuvering is very limited because it is controlled by the market no dialogue or mediation between the actors involved
Post-2011			
Revolution in Egypt	<i>Enthusiasm instigated during the events of 2011 and the hope for change</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergence of new initiatives in Downtown Cairo The possibility to experiment new approaches The interest of non-governmental organizations and the private sector to support new initiatives 		
2012			
CUIP Cairo Urban Initiatives Platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capture and explore the emergence of alternatives, document it and further expand it among a wider network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activating a platform premised on the use of Downtown Cairo's urban space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to a certain interested public, mostly those who can access the platform online
2012			
Artists as Urban Catalysts in Downtown Cairo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulating alternative re-imaginings of Downtown Cairo among different publics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production of multiple socio-spatial images/vision of Downtown Cairo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discursive formation on Downtown Cairo's future is inherently exclusive and conflictual
2014			
Hassan Khan Exhibition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulating a statement about potential alternative uses of available space in Downtown Cairo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Pop-up gallery"-activation of spaces for the cultural production and introducing a new use for the space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to groups that have know-how and access to network of supporting actors. Restricted use of public space
3 years until			
2015			
Downtown passageway mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reveal the latent potentials for urban change and further sharing among a wider public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change perception and deepen the understanding of Downtown on a micro level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited margins for bottom-up interventions or tactical approaches to benefit from the existing potentials
2015			
Renovation of Kodak and Philips passageways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design as a tool to promote an alternative approach to urban development and advocate for participation. employing "urban diplomacy" and "subversive tactic" during the opening ceremony 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renovation of the passage, installing urban furniture. Temporal occupation of the passage Building common grounds with authorities, thus granted support for further urban intervention projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiations with the government to acquire permits Coordinating between the conflicting interests between the stakeholders Negotiating with the private sector to counter gentrification Countering restricted activities (e.g. public

6.5 CASE STUDY 4: MANTIQTI

*Mantiqti*⁹² *Al-Borsa* (*Mantiqti* Arabic for ‘my neighbourhood’) is a hyper-local newspaper that was established in 2013 by Tarek Attia- journalist, CEO and Founder of the Egypt Media Development Program (EMDP) and publisher of *Mantiqti*. Already before the uprisings in 2011, Tarek Attia observed a lot of urban related issues in Cairo, among them, poor management of neighborhoods from a local government point of view. He then realized it happened due to the lack of “*strong civil society and strong local media*” (Soon, A. 2016, para. 4).

As such, this initiative focused on giving the local community a voice (Wagdi, Y. , Personal communication, November 8, 2016) and tried to put the local government under the spot light in order to “[...] *expose mismanagement*” (Soon, A. 2016, para. 2). Doing so, they aim at opening a dialogue between the government and other stakeholders by providing analytical reviews about local issues from various perspectives. This motive is explicated by Attia as he addresses the local community of *Al-Borsa* in the newspaper’s third issue, stating: “[*T*]his is an attempt to put an end to years of ignoring my voice and yours” (Attia 2013, p.2).

Choosing Downtown Cairo is primarily linked to the revolution, as Yahya Wagdi⁹³, the paper’s editor-in-chief, explains:

“During the revolution in 2011 and shortly after, Downtown was claimed by various groups (street vendors, shop owners, residents ...etc., including the government and the private sector). Each carried out their plans with no consideration of the common good and so we thought Mantiqti could play an important role in that matter; building bridges between the people” (Personal communication, November 8, 2016).

⁹² <https://mantiqti.cairolive.com/>

Wagdi reveals that the concern of Mantiqti is twofold. At once it is a way to create dialogue between various stakeholders and give voices to marginalized groups in Downtown Cairo and simultaneously, the group of Mantiqti has been working as part of a global debate on the survival or relevance of printed press in today's digital world. For Mantiqti's team *"it is still possible to save printed press, maybe not conventional newspapers but rather an innovative model of printed press"* (personal communication, November 8, 2016). According to Wagdi, it is more about following an alternative model to produce the newspaper. Here, the distribution network, providing the paper free of charge and most importantly focusing on *"micro press"*, takes precedence. In the case of Mantiqti, the people of Downtown; the residents, the shop-owners, the young people who frequent the area, the independent initiatives and the informal sector, are the focus of the newspaper. By the end of the second year of the newspaper (May 2015), Mantiqti started dedicating one page for journalist students in order to edit, design, photograph and write about a topic of their choice. This initiative is an attempt to bring the importance of local and innovative journalism to their attention and train them for practicing it.

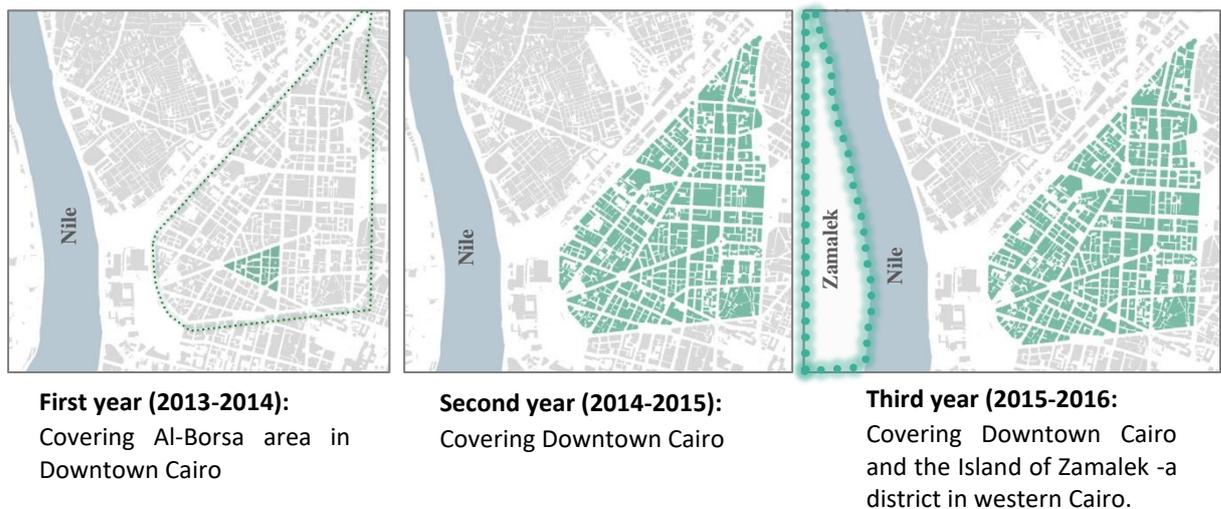
Multi-level Negotiations

Notwithstanding, the efforts exerted by Mantiqti to induce change, the purist to accomplish their aspirations is not devoid of challenges. Wagdi explains,

"[...] this kind of press is new and different; a free of charge newspaper, distributed locally under the current unstable political circumstances. Besides, the legal infrastructure for this kind of newspaper is contradictory in Egypt. The law of press (law 96), in 1996 has specific regulations. Although the higher council of press is responsible for giving permits for newspapers under the law 96, nonetheless, these regulations do not apply to us since we distribute the paper free of charge. Given that the council is trying to make all press submit to this law, they filed a case against us implicating that we issue a newspaper without permits. Fortunately we won the case after the first Court hearing. But we still face different kinds of challenges. Photography is now a very big issue, particularly in Downtown. Since our photographer is now acquainted with the police officers in the area, we do not face this challenge. If there is a new police officer they will stop him and question him" (personal communication, November 8, 2016).

Gradual Growth

After one year of its establishment, in May 2014, *Mantiqti Al-Borsa*'s coverage expanded all over Downtown Cairo and became *Mantiqti Wasat el Balad* (my neighbourhood Downtown Cairo) (Wagdi, Y., personal communication, November 8, 2016). Few months after its third year, in November 2015 *Mantiqti Wasat-el-Balad* included another neighborhood in Cairo (*Zamalek*) and thus became *Mantiqti Wasat-el-Balad and Zamalek* (Map 9).



Map 10: Gradual growth of the areas covered by Mantiqti.

Source: Base Map (Al Kadi 2012), comments and illustration by author.

The gradual growth of Mantiqti was not limited to the area it covered, but also the role it play as well as the relationship with the people. Most of the first year Mantiqti was more of an informative platform, where topics are selected by the curators and after field observations were made, this was directly linked to being unknown entity and new type of press for the people. Through time people realized they do not aim to expose them or place them in a vulnerable positions but rather shed the light on their problems, share their stories and who, where and what they do in Downtown. Accordingly the role of Mantiqti evolved to become a mediator as well, were the issues published and discussed in the newspaper have been proposed by the people themselves. As Wagdi stated, after a while the people of Downtown became co-producers of the newspaper content as well.

“Because of Mantiqti, people who do not usually read are now interested in the next issue of the newspaper, to the extent that they suggest topics. In each issue there is a primary theme, the more the theme is proposed by the people, the more priority it gains to be published” (Personal communication, November 8, 2016).

Outline of the following section:

35 issues published on the span of three year- starting from its initiation in 2013- have been analyzed in this research. The following section highlights two main themes that are discussed in these issues. The purpose is to reflect the content and type of public concerns found in the newspaper and the groups represented in the newspaper. Simultaneously, it aims to show how Mantiqti acts as a mediator in various local matters discussed in the newspaper. The examples cover data retrieved from successive issues of the newspaper; the first example focuses on the role of Mantiqti as *Mantiqti Al-Borsa* and the second focuses on its role after it grew to become *Mantiqti Wasat-el-Balad*.

6.5.1 First subject: Informal coffee shops at Al-Borsa area

As Mantiqti Al-Borsa:

One of the first issues Mantiqti focused on was the problem between the informal street coffee shops, the residents of Al-Borsa area and the local authorities. As mentioned before, Al-Borsa is a triangular shaped superblock in Downtown Cairo. It houses several important buildings including the Stock Exchange, the Central Bank, the National Bank and the Suez Canal Bank, the Old Radio building including the Cosmopolitan Hotel. This area was newly pedestrianized as a pilot project for the renovation of Downtown. It is also where Mantiqti’s working space is located

By 2013 the government regained control over the public space; they issued a decision to remove all informal coffee shops and street vendors from Downtown Cairo. As a result, 35 coffee shops along *A’ulwi* Street in Al-Borsa were shut down, for not having permits. This was partially due to the government’s attempt to resume the renovation plans of Downtown and to a great extent related to political factors. For example, TAMARUD (Arabic for insurgency) is a movement established by a group of activists responsible for

instigating the protest to overthrow President Mohamed Morsi in 2013; this was initiated in Al-Borsa, as the activists frequented the coffee shops (Mantiqti 2014b). After talking with various actors in order to reach some consensus, Mantiqti came up with a set of informal agreements (dubbed as *Al-Borsa constitution*) (Figure 29), which was published in the second issue of the newspaper. This agreement incorporates various rules that mediate the use of the streets and passageways of Al-Borsa superblock by the coffee shops, in a way that protects the rights of other groups. Some of the rules stated that the coffee shops must leave a distance for pedestrians to pass through the sidewalk and prohibits loud music after 9 p.m. since it disturbs the residents. Mantiqti invited the people to join and sign if they are willing to consider this agreement. In October 2013, Mantiqti shared with the coffee shops a new decision about transforming the area into a market for street vendors. The people and the coffee shop owners were not informed about the new decision. After some protests by the residents the decision was canceled, which reflects the lack of planning and comprehensive vision for the future of the area.

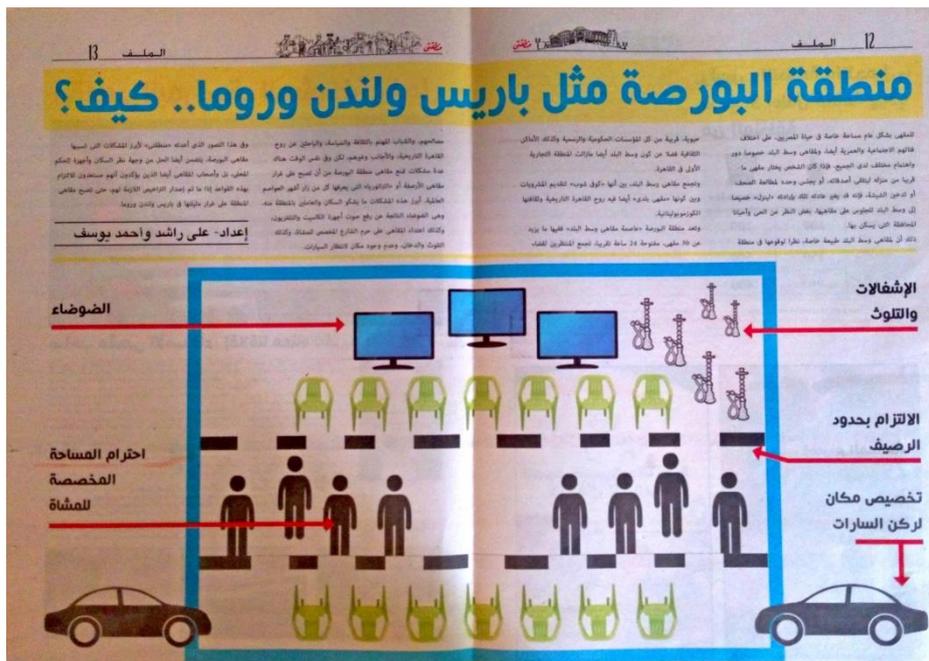


Figure 29: infographic and discussion published by Mantiqti about the problems of the coffee shops at Al-Borsa.

Source: edited by (Ali Rashed and Ahmed yousif, Mantiqti, issue 18, December 2014, pp.-13.

According to Wagdi, the owners of the coffee shop addressed Mantiqti after the eviction,

“The coffee shop owners came to us and said, the government kicked us out, we lost our business. We will commit to ‘Al-Borsa constitution’ but please support us and talk to the head of the district” (personal communication, November 8, 2016)

While the coffee shop owners agreed to accept **“Al-Borsa constitution”** if the local authority of the district of Downtown Cairo legalized them, yet they refused to open any dialogue with them after Attia (Mantiqti’s CEO) talked with the authority. The narrative of the local authorities- headed by the governor of Cairo- articulates the coffee shop owners as people that did not respect the law. On the other hand, in another area in Cairo (El Hussein), the informal street coffee shops have been legalized and now have certain regulations to follow. Similarly, the Sayes (Arabic for car guards) of Downtown have been also legalized under the prerequisite of providing the local authorities a daily fee (110 EGP) for the license -more than double the amount they actually make (20-40 EGP). This process of legalizing them is considered as a way to capitalize on their activity. The coffee shop owners offered to pay a monthly fee and respect the rules, yet, Al-Borsa’s problem seem to be beyond the informal use of the passage, since it is seen as a threat on the government for being the place frequented by activists during the revolution in 2011 and also after leading to the overthrow of the ousted president Mohamed Morsi, as mentioned before.

Despite the failed attempts to negotiate with the local authorities, Mantiqti was able to build a relationship with the people based on trust, after being skeptical to the amount of attention paid to their seemingly insignificant area. As a result, other marginalized groups started to address Mantiqti and provide them with material and photos in order to write about their problems.

As Wagdi elucidates “ since the government does not allow any opportunity for creating a dialogue and acts as an entity for announcing decisions, not discussing them with other stakeholders, people were desperate to make their voices heard. What was surprising for us, it is always the most vulnerable groups that contact us and suggest topics to write about” (personal communication, November 8, 2016).

With regard to the issue of the coffee shops it remains unsolved. Three years after shutting down the coffee shops, the residents and other shop owners stated that the coffee shops provided the area with a sense of security, “*Now the streets are dark and empty, our children can’t walk there and it is abandoned*” (*ibid*). In a personal interview with a member of high position at the National Organization for Urban Harmony- the governmental agency responsible for renewing Downtown Cairo- the same view was shared (May 9, 2017). In addition, he mentioned the necessity to change the approach of the government, stating “*it no longer works without participation, I am pleased with the way young professionals are approaching new projects such as CLUSTER and we are starting to follow this approach and pay more attention to the social dimension* ” (personal communication May 9, 2017). Inspired by CLUSTER’s approach, in 2017 the government set a meeting with the residence and shop owners along the Al-Alfy Street in Downtown Cairo. Accordingly they formed the ‘*union of the Occupants of Al-Alfy Street*’ as representative of the locals, in order to discuss the plans for the renovation and pedestrianization of the street (Mantiqti 2017). Despite these statements, it is yet unclear whether the government is looking forward to change its top-down approach towards the renovation of Downtown on a large scale, to the extent of considering supporting ‘informal’ activities and finding alternative solutions than evictions.

6.5.2 Second subject: The future of Downtown

As Mantiqti Wasat-el-Balad

Wagdi stated that one of the main aspects they focused on was trying to offer a counter narrative to the conventional accounts that portrays Downtown as “[...] *this westernized place, the place of the aristocrats*” (personal communication May 9, 2017). Since Downtown is not originally a residential area, as the old affluent district of Maadi with its own association of Maadi’s residents, it is mainly dominated by the government. This is also represented in its ownership. The ownership of properties in Downtown could be roughly divided among three main entities. First, State-Owned Enterprises and insurance companies (e.g. Misr Real Estate Assets Management). The second is governmental buildings such as ministries, Tax institutions...etc. and the third is owned by various families. In the last years, Al-Ismaelia for Real Estate Investment Company has been

exerting efforts to buy these buildings from the families. Thus, most of those who live or work in Downtown rent the space from these companies, which gives them very limited authority to take any decision.

Nevertheless, after the revolution the situation changed, other actors came in, cultural activities intensified, politically engaged people became more active and new groups re-discovered Downtown. The heavy presence of the Central Security Forces (CSF), particularly from 2005 till 2007, disappeared during and shortly after the revolution, thus young people with an alternative appearance, were not afraid of being arrested and could walk freely in the area. This however got out of control, for example, if street vendors were able to claim a whole street, they would carry on without taking into account the right of the pedestrians (Wagdi, Y., personal communication, November 8, 2016). Wagdi further states:

“As much as we need clearly defined regulations to protect the architectural heritage of Downtown, my concern, is that with the lack of participation in the decision-making process, the centralized authority of the government in the rehabilitation process of khedival Cairo might diminish its diversity, which they consider as chaos”(personal communication, November 8, 2016).

Several issues of the newspaper addressed the local governorate and NOUH (National Organisation for Urban Harmouny) in order to create a dialog and encourage them to share their vision and approach to the renovation of Downtown Cairo. The following analysis outlines the socio-spatial discourse instigated by Mantitqti as attempts to mediate between the people and the local government and encourage the latter to share their vision and give the former a voice in the matter. During these attempts, Mantiqti has addressed several members from the local authorities and shared their view in the newspaper; other attempts were initiated in the newspaper and either received response from representatives of the local governorate and local administration of the district of Downtown or did not. Few examples show initiatives from Mantiqti provide informative mapping of certain buildings. For example, they created an illustration map (Figure 30) of the governmental building complex (*Mugama' -el-Tahrir*) for administrative services.

sidewalks in Downtown. This problem was discussed and published by Mantiqti twice, the first was in the 6th issue, September 2014, yet there was not response from the side of the government and the situation got worse after evicting the street vendors, which cleared the sidewalks and revealed the deteriorating state. Thus, Mantiqti issued a second time on the 20th issue, February 2015. As a result, in April 2015, a response to Mantiqti was published. After the **pavement and the sidewalk** were renovated by order from the governor as a result of the former issue published by Mantiqti. The governor encouraged Mantiqti to conduct a field visit at the same locations and check the difference (Figure 31).



Figure 31: Photos published by Mantiqti under the title: “Sidewalks in Downtown.. Patchwork!”.
Source: Photos by Siddiq Al bakhshongi, in Mantiqti, issue 20, February 2015, pp. 12-13.

Several controversial topics are also addressed in the newspaper. Such as the wide spread of CCTV cameras after the revolution in Downtown Cairo and whether the people consider them as means for security or suppression of their freedom and ways to control protests. The continuous eviction of street vendors, who keep returning to Downtown due to the lack of commitment to provide alternatives for their economic loss as promised. Among these are also a column called “Forbidden in Downtown”, which shares the

various struggles of the cultural activities in Downtown due to censorship and restriction, including the banning of public gatherings, and photography and hanging flyers in order to advertise any cultural event. Among the Forbidden things in Downtown is for the coffee shops to screen the football matches, since it encourages public gathering. The CEO of Mantiqti conducted an interview with the Major General Hussein Abdel-Bari, in order to discuss the obstacles of security measures that result in diminishing the cultural life in Downtown, to which the general stated “*We encourage art and culture but we stand for legal legitimacy*” (Matiqti 2014, p. 9).

6.5.2.1 Promoting an alternative approach to renewing Downtown:

The significance of this case lies in the ways it promotes alternative approaches to Downtown’s renovation, where they address small-scale issues that impact subaltern groups and attempt to situate it within the large scale of renewing the area. This is particularly evident in the integration between formal and informal as an established mode of practice in Downtown and Cairo at large. In various issues, Mantiqti attempted to support people who practice informal activities and were facing eviction problems. Simultaneously, in their topic about the garbage collection system in Downtown, for example, they provided detailed information about the location and various actors involved in this process including both formal and informal systems.

On the other hand, the government’s approach is limited to visual and non-tangible aspects that contribute to the image of Downtown as a “Belle Époque”. NOUH (National Organization for Urban Harmony) exerts efforts on preserving the Khedive heritage of Downtown by focusing on tangible heritage manifested in the architecturally significant buildings, where they re-paint the facades and change the tiles of the newly pedestrianized passages, as well as non-tangible heritage of the area, by launching projects such as (Lived here) listing all the important and prominent figures who lived in Downtown and (A street’s tale) –a project that was initiated in 2018, and based on placing documentary signs in prominent streets in Downtown Cairo that narrates the importance of the name of the street, and the most prominent achievements of the person whose name is carried by the street, in order to interest the passers-by to learn more about those personalities (Suleiman, A.M. 2019). Despite the importance of such

projects, yet, it does not include nor consider the fate of those who live and work in the area. The government's approach towards the conservation of the cultural heritage in Downtown did not resonate with their claimed targets as mentioned by El Kadi and Elkerdani , namely, considering the urban value of the place including “[...] *the quality of public space and the local inhabitants' perspectives*”(2006, p. 360). In June 2014, Mantiqti issued several interviews with experts and real-estate brokers agents most of which are stating that the real-estate market in Downtown is stagnating. This reflects that while the government is desperately taking scattered decisions to attract investors, yet the relocation of AUC and the security issue in Downtown after the revolution were push factors that added to slowing the top-down renovation plans.

In relation to Mantiqti's role to counter the government's approach, what they could achieve, is limited to their know-how and authority, as a result, Wagdi elaborates

“though we do not often reach to a solution for the issues we discuss in the newspaper because there is hardly a dialogue with the government, but we make sure the problems are published. This never happened before. This kind of press never existed and the official media deals with issues from a top-down point of view and these problems [referring to the kind of issues that Mantiqti focus on] for them are very minor. There are no mediators or civil society or even lobby to put pressure or negotiate alternatives. So we found ourselves playing that role, but we always try to do it from a journalistic point, not to claim other mediating roles; we consider ourselves as an informative mediator, or rather, through the Mantiqti, people have a voice” (personal communication, November 8, 2016).

While the government is focused on listing the buildings that have architectural significance and the prominent figures that lived in Downtown, Mantiqti is interested in providing/listing maps and information about the location, type and profile of street vendors, coffee shops owners, garbage collectors and its system, and share their experience. Including mapping of all charity food tables in Ramadan for the poor, parking location in Downtown for car owners who frequent Downtown, since the government banned parking in the area.

6.5.3 Creating a platform for subaltern groups to represent their own image of Downtown

The analysis shows how Mantiqti provided a platform or a horizon for constant production of socio-spatial imaginaries of Downtown, which in turn changed the perception of , to whom Downtown and its urban spaces belong. This is reflected in the trust built between the people of Downtown and Mantiqti, where they are actively engaged in proposing and at times demanding to be represented and share their problems and experiences. These negotiations, both taken by the people and published by Mantiqti could be considered as constantly constructing different and conflicting visions of Downtown where it is claimed, used and temporally altered. These various ‘Downtowns’ belonged to different *publics*- to mention a few- the street vendors, the car guards, the informal coffee shop owners, the informal kiosk owners, the residents, the young groups involved in cultural production and the private investors. The topics addressed are mostly on micro-level, representing subaltern groups as much as other groups.

While Mantiqti is unable to enforce change or address all problems of the above mentioned groups, yet, every topic or problem discussed and shared is a temporary enactment of a certain reality of Downtown that is shared in a wider horizon and thus made *public*. Thus, acknowledging these different realities and sharing them among a wider public puts the government in a challenging position to oversee them. This is proven by the limited yet progressive responses seen in the few examples above.

The analysis show that Mantiqti started from the ground up, they informed and familiarized the people with their work, motives and who they are, focusing on the local level and slowly expanding and strategically growing, till they cover more areas and also become not only an informative entity but also a representative or a mediator. At the same time, it could be argued that their approach cultivated a civic culture among the people to practice their right in being informed and sharing their opinion, as shown in the following table (Table 5).

The potential of Downtown and its urban spaces for this kind of public-making lies in both the timing of the revolution, the renewed attention to Downtown and the changes

that occurred and daily conflicts between its divers groups and thus the need for a mediating actor. All presented an opportunity for the curators of the initiative to create a new business model that demonstrates the survival potentials of printed media and the important role of local media to shed the light on local authorities and give voices to the people. Being a printed newspaper facilitated the accessibility of the newspaper among certain subaltern groups, and most importantly gave the distribution locations a key role in that matter.

As such, the spatiality of Mantiqti as a process of producing *publicness* is not limited to the working space of the newspaper but rather the sites addressed in the various topics, the distribution point in Downtown and the paper itself. Each played a certain role as a material actor. Following the guidelines of the *Processual* analysis (Pettigrew, A., M., 1997), the table below (Table 5) chronologically outlines the progress and expansion of Mantiqti, in relation to their intended goals. It also highlights the approach adopted by this collective actor (Mantiqti) in making the concerns of different groups in Downtown public.

Table 5: Towards promoting transparent local governance and giving the local community a voice

Source: prepared by author.

Phases	Form of public-making	transformations in relation to urban space	Limitation/Challenge
Before-2011			
No platform that focuses on local issues in Downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspire for entrepreneurial start-ups that invest in high quality content production of local journalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local media could help in improving urban development problems related to dysfunctional local governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of the culture that value the importance of local media. Doubt that everyday economics would be of relevance or interest to the consumers
Post-2011	<i>Enthusiasm instigated during the events of 2011 and the hope for change</i>		
Revolution in Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewed interest in Downtown Cairo The possibility to experiment new approaches The rise of a need to take a mediating role, given the situation of Downtown post-2011 		
2013-2014	<i>Launching Mantiqti in mid-2011</i>		
Launching the first issue-Mantiqti El Borsa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing a new kind of journalism, where, different groups, both formal and informal sectors, as well as residents were equally represented in the newspaper. Circulating information about the area, what is happening in it and who lives or work there. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a civic culture among the community, premised on their right to know what is happening in their area and reach to an informal agreement, dubbed as "El Borsa constitution" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People were skeptical and shocked about this intensive focus of the paper on their small area and seemingly irrelevant topics. Long time span to gain trust among the people and achieve an attractive ROI (Return on Investment)
2014-2015			
Expanding Mantiqti Wasat El Balad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding to cover all of Downtown Create a dialogue with the authorities and mediate between different local groups and the government Through their network they were able to access information about the government's plan and make it public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producing different counter-narratives of Downtown through the newspaper Receiving (limited) response from the government on the urban issues discussed in the newspaper Shared profiles of various "informal" groups and put them on the map of Downtown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vision of Downtown Cairo's future is exclusive and conflictual Limited opportunity to engage all actors in the process. Security measures impose restricting working atmosphere.
2015-2016			
Expanding Mantiqti Wasat El Balad and Zamalek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding to cover another neighbourhood in Cairo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Triggered the curiosity of the people to demand to be informed Government started to change their approach in implementing pilot projects, yet this is not always the case. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since 2016 Downtown has been changing in a relatively faster pace than the years before

CHAPTER 07

7 DISCUSSION

Implications of the findings in relation to the research questions and hypothesis:

Each of the presented case studies reveals a unique and different relationship to urban space; this is due to the different forms of interplays between the three dimensions of public-making, which govern such relationship. Three sets of findings can be withdrawn in relation to the central questions of the research. In terms of the first research question:

How did the production of *publicness* change in Downtown Cairo in the aftermath of the revolution 2011?

By looking at the overall process of each individual case study, in relation to the context and shared experience in Downtown Cairo since 2011, the following findings are revealed:

1. The **revolution was a catalyst**, both, in the creation of new initiatives and in the re-definition of existing ones.
2. The relationship to urban space vary from one case to another, yet the implications of their activities on the **temporal transformation of urban space** in terms of use and re-appropriation for public-making bears many resemblances.

In terms of the second research question:

In which way is Downtown's urban space negotiated for public-making by various middle-class groups?

Based on common patterns shared by the four cases studies, notwithstanding the difference of their type of activity (cultural/artistic, media or architecture and urbanism...etc.), the urban space of Downtown played a cardinal role in their negotiations for public-making. The implications of these findings show that:

3. The **mode of their practice** is influenced by existing context-specific aspects in Downtown Cairo (e.g. diversity and informality) as well as other factors related to the aftermaths of the 2011-revolution. In the following section these three points are discussed in details.

7.1 Revolution as catalyst

The revolution provided the new generation and young groups an opportunity to discover Downtown- apart from the few that frequented the area before 2011. The result was twofold:

7.1.1 Impact on the renovation plans of Downtown Cairo

With regard to the governmental and investment plans, the revolution interrupted the ongoing renovation process of Downtown Cairo. These renovation plans were set to target groups, who are particularly interested in the 'bygone golden days' of Downtown Cairo. Unexpectedly, however, the revolution resulted in the change of the investor's previous plans, by lowering the income bracket of their targeted groups as well as their age; to 30-40 years old professionals and students (Mantiqti Issue 12, June 2014). This indicates the arrival of a new and different public to Downtown.

In addition, the Egyptian bureaucracy combined with the old rent law that makes rents inheritable from one generation to another created joint factors that worked in favor of halting gentrification or at least slowing it down, by reducing the chance for investors to rapidly raise the property value or rent. This in turn gives people the time to adapt to the new changes. As argued by Nagati⁹⁵, revitalization and gentrification share many aspects, yet the defining factor of revitalization is that the cost of rent and properties remain affordable for the low income people and the hindering of displacement. Eventually change is inevitable and especially when it is initiated by powerful actors (personal communication, November 1, 2016). Since 2011, social responsibility of the private sector and foreign organizations has been a supportive factor to the emerging practices. Hence, in a general sense it could be argued that the revolution contributed to some extent in fostering attempts from the bottom-up to preserve the diversity of Downtown Cairo.

7.1.2 The revolution as a common horizon for bottom-up practices

The revolution itself became the horizon upon which others took that notion further and adopted it as a way of their everyday life struggles, in diverse ways. The data revealed that the period of the 2-3 years after the revolution allowed different groups to experiment alternative modes of practice. This period of absence of state-control allowed enough time for them to grow and establish their identity, test different modes of application and tools to negotiate their survival. While various accounts suggest that survival is not enough for true urban change, yet, their survival is imperative for safe guarding the diversity of Downtown Cairo. A crucial and concomitant aspect is that their survival is directly linked to the survival of working-class in Downtown Cairo, since as the data showed they coexist and share the same space with subaltern groups creating a complementary relationship (such as the cases of Zawya and Townhouse), and in other cases their work focuses on the everyday life of subaltern groups (such as the cases of

⁹⁵ Omar Nagati is the co-founder of CLUSTER and an architect whose view as an expert on this above issue is not only based on his professional background, but also based on his experience in implementing projects in Downtown Cairo since 2012.

Mantiqti) and the mode of production adopted, asserts the intertwined relation between formal and informal milieus.

While in those three strands of activities (Media, Architecture/urbanism and art/culture) there have already been independent initiatives, slowly growing in the last decade before the 2011-revolution and focused particularly on bringing local and international ideas together, yet, it was limited to certain groups. After 2011 it has become the interest of ordinary citizens. This interest is driven by the awakened inspiration from the experience of the revolution. The revolution gave them a push to grow on a different level occupying a different type of space or rather combining a variety of venues. Creating new horizons, where they crystalized as a public. In other words, the revolution popularized different forms of urban activism within the aforementioned fields.

Looking from a different angle, an unexpected finding from the empirical data pertains to the fact that before the revolution these types of activities enjoyed a certain degree of freedom for being invisible and relatively limited to certain groups. While Post-2011 introduced these forms of activism to a wider public, yet shedding the light on them, resulted in the establishment of new regulations that are stricter and in many cases frustrate the efforts of small-groups. For that matter, the research aims to emphasize that the analysis and findings laid out here, do not necessarily aim to evaluate whether the implications of the revolution could be rendered as a success story or otherwise. Rather it focused on providing an in-depth understanding of the role of the aftermath conditions of the revolution in the urban transformations occurred post 2011.

7.2 Transforming the urban dimension of *public-making* since 2011

The case studies revealed urban transformations on three levels suggested by Iveson (2007), which interchangeably occurred depending on the activity. At times overlapping within one case study and sometimes even within the same project. These urban transformations are directly linked to the way urban space has been used by each initiative.

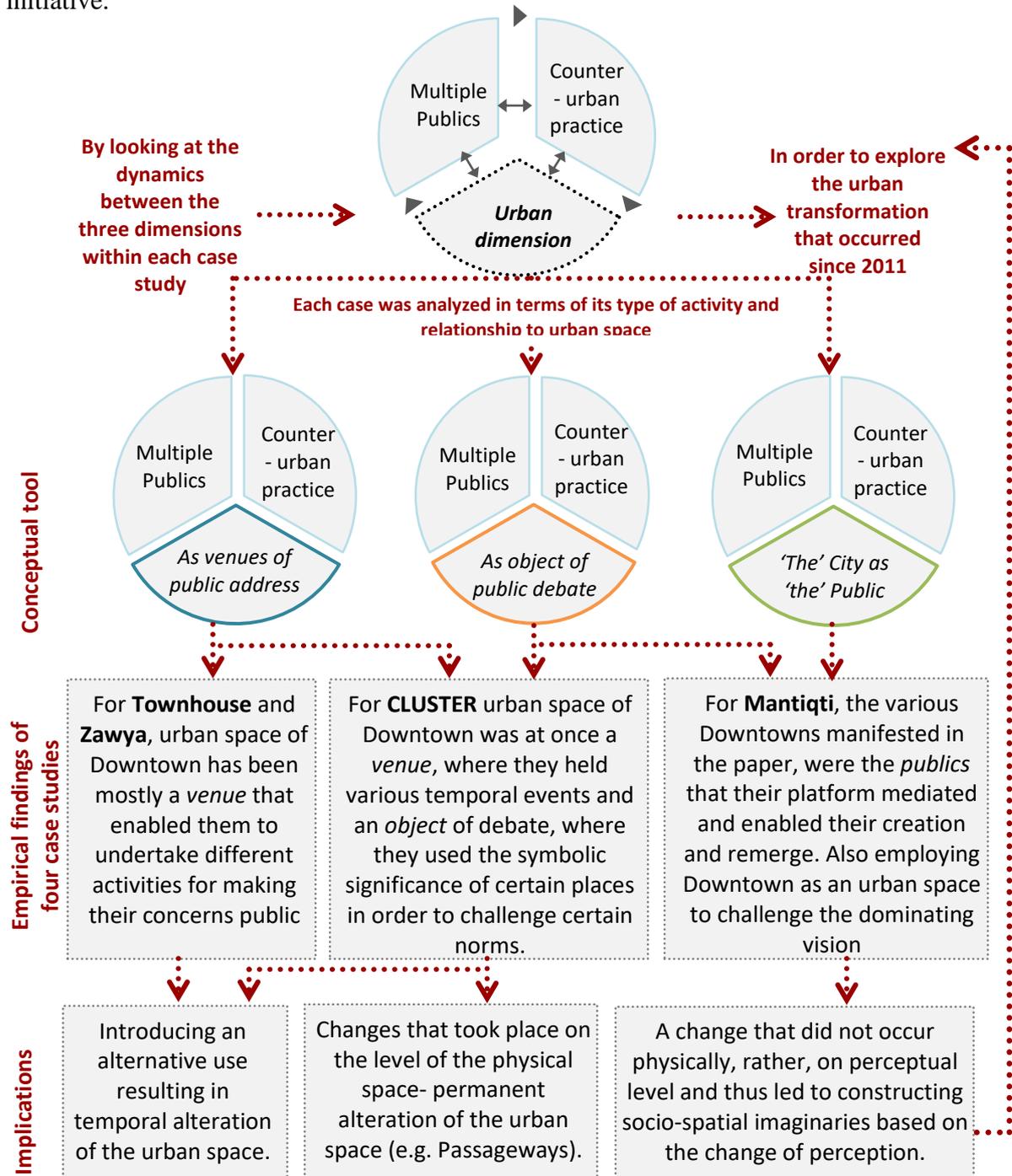


Diagram 5: The main findings in relation to the conceptual framework

Source: prepared by author

7.2.1 Temporal activation of the various urban spaces in Downtown for different forms of activism

- In the case of Zawya, the temporal appropriation of the passage (e.g. by placing the information desk outside of the cinema along the passageway or extending the waiting area, where the audience stand and further by integrating the seating area of the coffee shop during, before and after the screenings). In other cases these seating areas have become a place where the audience held discussions and exchange of ideas after the screening. Even inside the cinema the screening hall was occasionally used for discussions and holding sessions with the directors of the films.
- In the case of Townhouse, temporal activation of the space was mainly by art projects that took place in the passageway or combined the passage with the space of the factory as explained in the example of the *Silence of the Lambs*, in 2009 by the late Amal Kenawy and in 2010, “*Complaints Choir*⁹⁶ in Cairo”, among other projects. In addition, according to Wells, in some projects the mechanics emptied the garages for art performance events (Spence, R. 2018).
- In the case of CLUSTER this was revealed by the pop-up gallery project and the opening ceremony of the renovation project of the passageways, both are cases where there has been temporal activation of the space, both for cultural production. The aim of each project differed; Hassan Khan project aimed at promoting an *alternative use* in the urban space and the renovation project of the passageway aimed at promoting an alternative approach to urban renovation projects.

These temporal occurrences resulted not only in temporal alteration of the built environment, but more importantly in introducing different ways to re-appropriate the urban space. The kind of urban space that was used varied, from publicly designated alleyways and passageways, to privately owned workshops on the ground level. Here, ability to employ the interface between both kinds of spaces has shown great

⁹⁶ Complaints Choir is a community art project that invites people to sing about their complaints in their cities. The idea originated in Birmingham (UK) in 2005 by a Finnish curator and was adopted in various cities around the world.

potential. In addition various public meeting, discussions and brain storming sessions took place in private apartments that was transformed into a research lab, a gallery or a working space.

7.2.2 Changes on the level of the built environment

- One of the prominent changes in this category is seen in the projects covered by CLUSTER- design project of the passageways. As mentioned before while these changes happen to be in the physical built environment, yet, the implications of the process itself and the ideas they manifest, are more significant.
- Small example could also be found in the case of Mantiqti, for example, where the government laid out new tiles for some of the sidewalks as a result of addressing the issue in the newspaper.

7.2.3 Change that occurred on the perceptual level

- These changes could be observed in the way various groups constructed socio-spatial imaginaries of Downtown. These are shown in the case of CLUSTER and Mantiqti, where discourses resulted in the production of various images of Downtown; these constructs are spatial manifestations of the common horizon shared by multiple publics. Sharing alternative discourses than the ones led by the mainstream narratives resulted in the enactment of various Downtowns. Each narrative plays a role in the way people think and use the built environment-Downtown. This change in perception is resembled in three cases,
- The first relates to how subaltern groups demand to share their view about the way Downtown is being renovated as seen in the case of Maniqti
- The second is seen in discussions and events led by CLUSTER, where different actors joined debates about the future of Downtown and how to approach it.
- The third, in Townhouse, where various collectives approach Townhouse for support and available space for achieving their goals.

As such, urban space keeps acquiring new roles as an *actent* (Latour, B. 2005a; Clarke, A.E. 2003), in the process of *public-making*. This implicated transformation of urban space occurs by virtue of its re-appropriation and further association in new relationships

with heterogeneous elements (see Table 6 below) in order to make a certain concern public. For example, associating screening of a process (e.g. meeting of shop owners with CLUSTER group for the renovation of the passage) that occurred in a certain space-time with the event occurring in real time (e.g. the opening ceremony of the passageway), results in further channeling of this process (participation in the decision-making) among other publics; a process that went beyond the *publics* existing in the site, even further hosting discussions in several academic and private venues about the lessons learned from the projects and its implications.

While looking at these practices separately might not suggest a new aspect, yet bringing them together in a certain relationship and employing this configuration for a certain cause (or public concern), unveils the process by which collectives made public. In that sense various urban spaces in Downtown Cairo have become a space for producing *publicness*.

One of the significances of these practices lies in the emergence of supporting networks among various active groups in Downtown Cairo. The formation of these relatively bigger networks of interested publics meant easier circulation of ideas, expertise and information on new occurrences. While in relation to the government it is still limited, yet, as the case of CLUSTER and Mantiqti show these active groups aim to create a dialogue with the authorities, keeping in mind the varying degrees to which this was achieved.

The previous review on the urban history of Downtown Cairo shows how the governments understanding of public space, predicates on being seen and heard in public squares and similar urban spaces, thus invisible activities are rendered less significant. Although acting in public in the sense of being visible to the masses has its impact, nonetheless, acting in latent spaces provided a different opportunity to explore alternatives, particularly in the case of Downtown Cairo post-2011. This aspect could be one of the main lessons learned from this experience.

The analysis revealed that the previous achievements were based on situating the following aspects in various relationships, depending on the goal of each group:

Table 6: Common resources employed for enacting the public concern found in the case Studies
1. Employing different forms of negotiations by means of the power of <i>public</i> and <i>private</i> , in terms of their normative and spatial designation (e.g. private ownership)
2. Availability of vacant space and its combination with interested powerful groups (e.g. private owners, investors, donors or local authorities) which rendered them as maneuverable spaces.
3. Motivation evoked by the experience of the revolution.
4. Interface between formal and informal as an established mode of practice
5. Utilizing the historical and symbolic significance of Downtown Cairo
6. Relying on awakened sense of social responsibility in the private sector in order to financially support their projects, in addition to other non-governmental institutions.

7.3 Mode of practice

Quiet and gradual encroachments (Bayat 2010), this could be considered as the defining feature and common underlying characteristic of the mode of application adopted in the four initiatives.

The data show, their process is marked by slow growth, incremental actions and working on small-scale projects. Almost all projects started by establishing their identity and initiating alternative projects (pilot projects). Subsequently, they focus on widening their horizon and distributing their concern in wider channels was directly linked to occupying more space, either physically, by means of use or symbolically by changing perceptions and acquiring more publics. Simultaneously, they deal with new materiality, as elaborated in the previous section- one that is premised on the multiplicity of venues and a mode of practice marked by a fusion of various activities; combining alternative tools with traditional approaches. For example, in almost all the cases relying on publications and documentation of the projects and circulating this experience further among other publics is a common observation. Both CLUSTER and Townhouse are registering as a company (rendering them as nonpolitical). They creatively play different, more flexible and constantly changing games; each project targets certain aspect and is slightly differently implemented.

Almost all the groups became more dependent on the support of local private investors and sponsors, given the lack of foreign funds after the revolution. While in some of the cases (e.g. Zawya) their concern might have been the focus, yet in all four cases the byproduct was reflected in an interface between different modes (formal and informal) and interaction between different social groups. While they cater for less-budget young groups, as revealed in the case of Zawya (e.g. the price of the tickets) and Townhouse (offering the Rawabet Theater for only operational cost for small independent groups) and in Mantiqti they provide the paper free of charge. This does not necessarily denote that these activated spaces are meant to be “open for all”, yet they are rather bringing a wider public to share their horizon and extending the domain of their concerns.

The role of these groups in the production process of Downtown Cairo's urban space could be characterized in the following:

- Each group considered informality, dealt with it, embraced it and integrated with it as an existing feature, as an alternative to the government's approach where they tend to neglect informality as an established practice, by amputating this form of practice and, to an extent, the social groups who employ it, by concealing them from the constructed narratives about Downtown and its further renovation plans.
- In addition, these initiatives are filling a gap between the people and the hegemonic powers; be it the authorities, private sector or other powerful institutions, within the borders of their profession and expertise. As the case studies reveal, independent professional groups play a key role in the survival of the heterotopic nature of Downtown, mainly by taking the role of mediators in the process. As such, their work could be denoted as forms of *professional activism* (Al-Harithy, H. 2015). The data show that they combine professional activism with entrepreneurial models of application in organizing their initiatives, in order to revolutionize the mode of practice in various fields. Both CLUSTER and Mantiqti are concerned with training students, in order to prepare the new generation for meeting future challenges with progressive methods. In this process not only their mode of practice changes but also the use of urban space and the perception towards its mode of production.

Examples of such *professional activism* from the reconstruction process in the aftermath of the 2006 war in Lebanon reveal similar patterns. Bottom-up approaches, adopted by volunteering groups of architects and planners, sharing their know-how in a post-war reconstruction process, reflected the “*intersection of different interest groups*” in the process and the politics that derived their motives, specifically under the lack of clearly defined goals. Community activism and its diverse interventions, notwithstanding the degree to which they succeeded or failed, “*offer multiple lessons for non-governmental initiatives and models that may be applicable to other post-war-reconstruction contexts* (Al-Harithy, H. 2015, p,49). Al Sayyad stated that this process shows that “*informed and*

politically conscious, social active architects”, possess the power to engage in positive ways with the public and trigger public interest and discourse “*around issues of rebuilding*” Al-Harithy, H. 2015, p, 49). While the devastations and losses resulted by wars are far from being compared to the case of Cairo, yet the similarity lies in the effect of a renewed hope among young groups to rebuild a different Egypt that enabled them - combined with their professional related assets- to explore alternatives and further distribute it among wider publics.

Table 7 Common underlying patterns in the curators’ mode of practice

1. working within the framework of incremental and small-scale projects, while at the same time, strategically integrating with larger networks and redefying new goals, thus synthesizing a variety of approaches
2. Resorting to different modes of engagement that focus of building bridges between groups and a dialogue with the government instead of direct dissent.
3. By combing a fusion of activities that employs the urban spaces, where their activities are, in order to achieve alternatives.
4. Employing their acquired know-how and negotiation skills from their previous careers in the private sector. While it does not enable them to radically change the status quo, yet, it enables in altering and innovatively creating new types of relationships.

7.3.1 Relationship between professional background and adopted mode of practice

Despite the opposing debates around the controversial⁹⁷ experience of Beirut’s PPP (public private partnership), with the real estate company *Solidere*, for the renewal of Beirut’s Central Area (so-called *exchange model*), yet, according to Gavin, a certain aspect pertaining to the model or the approach, is worthy of considering, for any

⁹⁷ It was considered by few accounts as unique and successful, yet non-transferable experience (Gavin, A. 2015), and by other accounts as an experience that provided the company a powerful position in addition to its profit oriented goals, resulting in social-spatial polarization and marginalizing subaltern groups (El Kadi 2012).

contemporary urban design development to be successful. Gavin highlights this aspect, by making a distinction between *market-based* versus *market-responsive* approaches. Referring to the latter, he describes it as “[...] *professionally sophisticated and keenly aware of the need to chart an informed course between the creation of value and protection of the public interest*” (Gavin, A. 2015, p.51).

The essence of this approach resembles the background and work ethics, where most of the groups in the studied cases come from. The findings show that before 2011 most of them worked in professional private entities. Thus, they combine the professional training and skills with social responsibility and motivation triggered by the revolution. This unique position provides them with the power to negotiate alternatives. While not necessarily focused on the field of urban design, yet their work lies within the borders of urban issues and are directly linked to the making of the city. Another advantage, regarding the potentials of these models, is that in mega projects priorities are usually set on the national level, favoring the city’s global position and by extent the powerful groups on the expenses of other groups. As a result, in Cairo’s case, similar to the case of Beirut, re-positioning the role of the country in the Middle East take precedence. This was manifested by the “*Dubai on the Nile*” renders and emphasized, non-tangibly, by projects such as *Lived Here* and *A street’s tale projects in Downtown Cairo*, feeding the nostalgic narratives of Downtown Cairo. In incremental, small-scale projects, however - as shown in the case studies- priorities are set differently, where emphasis are rather on the small groups, who are directly affected by the project.

7.3.2 Context-specific aspects of urban activism

The initiatives analyzed here are very particular to the context of Downtown Cairo. While they are led by middle-class young professionals (architects, artists, urban activist or middle class residents) and might be advocating for the similar cause, found in different forms of urban activism -DIY Urbanism or insurgent, pop-up or guerilla urbanism- that takes place in USA and Europe (Donovan 2014; Talen 2014; Douglas 2014), however they differ in various aspects.

First, while the discourse on gentrification is not the main focus of this research, yet, scholars often argue that independent DIY-urbanism groups contribute to the gentrification of neighbourhoods, where they are established. While this might be the case in other context, such interplays are differently mediated in Downtown Cairo.

In a personal interview with Nadia Dropkin and Dina Abouelsoud, owners of various cultural oriented small-businesses in Downtown Cairo, Dropkin and Abouelsoud shared their experience, both as residents and small-business owners in Downtown Cairo for 12 years (since 2002) before and after the revolution. Dropkin and Abouelsoud are owners of Dina's Hostel, a low budget hostel for backpackers in Downtown Cairo, the space no longer operate, since *Al Ismaelia* Company - the owner of the property- did not extend the rent contract and they had to shut down. This however, was not a process free of negotiations and efforts from *Al Ismaelia* Company's side in order to expel them from the place. After the revolution in 2014, they established two projects. *K-project* at café Kafein, a café that collaborates with young artists and offer the physical space of the café for hanging and exhibiting their paintings and *Eish + Malh*, (Arabic for bread and salt) a restaurant that promotes *slow food* cultural and local food production combined with its collaboration with independent cinemas (e.g. Zawya and Cinematique) to host screening event at their space and live music concerts for young musician. *Eish + Malh* restaurant is located in Kodak passageway where CLUSTER undertook its pilot projects and thus Dropkin and Abouelsoud collaborated with CLUSTER in various events. The following statement- extracted from the interview-, reflect the particularity of the context in Downtown Cairo pertaining to discourses on gentrification and the implication of the emerging activities on the neighbourhood.

Abouelsoud stated, “[...] *I think that there are a lot of activities that were happening in Downtown Cairo, before the revolution and are no longer there*”, Dropkin added “[...] *the thing is that you have to look at the things that are happening in the past two years; the rent has gone up, a lot of it motivated by Al-Ismaelia, and this façade renovation process undertook by the government, a very superficial project. So I think gentrification is happening, but you can't talk about it the same way you talk about it anywhere else because normally gentrification is about the moving of people, of residents and this has happened in Downtown through history, but I don't think that the people who live in Downtown now are moving out, because they are not finding affordable*

housing anywhere else. This kind of gentrification is different, you can't compare this to Brooklyn or Berlin, because it is not about residents being dislocated by art institutions coming in and raising up the value of the rents. On the contrary Dina is frustrated by Downtown, because it has its limits... Financial limits. When you try to hire someone for a job, they ask Tagamo' el khamis [the fifth settlement in new Cairo], you say no Wasat-el-balad [Downtown Cairo] They already have this image that of course it is not a nice place, why would I go to Downtown...”, Abouelsoud added “[...] because the workers...everyone actually...they prefer to go to the new settlements on the outskirts of Cairo, they are paid better” (Personal communication, 29 Mai 2017)

This discussion reveals two aspects, while the property value is getting up, it is the cultural and entertainment spaces that cannot afford it and thus are moving out of Downtown. Residents from the upper-middle and middle class are not interested or attracted to Downtown Cairo. This however is not to claim that gentrification is not happening or might not intensify on the long run. It is merely to reflect on whether it is plausible to bracket the emerging initiatives in Downtown Cairo as gentrifying activities, given that other external factors play a key role in the future development of Downtown Cairo and its implications or threats on dislocating the subaltern groups established in the neighbourhood.

Moreover, the previously presented analysis of the case studies, reflected how each case used their (limited) power to hinder gentrifying consequences to their project both intentional and unintentionally, this however has its limitation and might not have a profound impact against gentrification in Downtown on the long term. Yet, the point registered here, refers to the conscious approach of these collectives towards other groups that co-exist in their neighbourhood. In Townhouse, countering gentrification was reflected by supporting the coffee shops and refraining from opening a café or any food and drinks service in order to encourage the use of the surrounding popular coffee shops. In Zawya, the articulated situation revealed how the neighbouring popular coffee shop benefited from the audience. In the case of CLUSTER, negotiations undertaken in order to convince *Al Ismaelia* Company to renew Philips passageway, despite the fact that such renovations would hinder the company's goals, could be seen as an attempt to support

other groups and empower them for facing inevitable challenges by the real-estate owners, at least for the short term.

Second, by virtue of the context, where they emerged, they are differently mediated in the context of Downtown Cairo. They combine informal and formal modes of practices that are particular to Cairo. The formal could be represented in applying for permits from the government to undertake their activities and the informal is not only represented in adopting informal approaches to implementing their activity but also to the way they establish their relationship with the authorities, in the sense that their performance resembles Bayat's notion –*quiet encroachment*; constantly testing the limits of the established rules and regulations and “normalized” use of space and ideologies and choosing insignificant, hidden spaces to gain more freedom. The use of *quiet encroachment* here is not limited to acquiring more physical space, but includes acquiring more power to sustain the means to preserve diversity and create space for tolerating difference. Here it is reflected in building networks; reaching more publics who are interested in a certain kind of activity and it goes to the extent of building a relationship with the government to get permits and a relative autonomy. Although, unlike Bayat's urban poor- who adopts *quiet encroachment* as a strategy for their survival- the art and culture activists do not make *gains* by obtaining more urban space to housing or public services (e.g. electricity and water and land for shelter), yet they make *gains* by obtaining opportunities for *public-making* in the city.

Third, the articulation of urban activism in Cairo and Arab/Muslim cities, particularly in relation to their political context, might differ from framing this practice in other political contexts. First, in the context of Cairo and the Middle East in a border sense, actions that find resemblance in their mode of practice with urban activism do not necessarily follow the logic of *resistances* or explicit opposition, since most authoritarian regimes do not allow any opportunity for collective insurgent actions (Bayat 2010). Rather, they rely on “[...] *tactical retreats, going invisible, bribing the officials, or concentrating on particular and less strategic spaces*” (Bayat 2010, p. 61). Bayat's refers to this concept as “*quiet encroachment*” (2010, p.14), where people resort to tactical, gradual practice, both intentional and unintentional, that utilizes the potentials of urban space in order to ‘*gain*’ it (2010), which resonates with the notion of the *right to the city*,

seen as negotiating power relations in order to reconfigure an alternative process of space production. Alsayaed reveals a resonating observation through his comparison on urban informality between Latin American and Middle eastern contexts, while the former tends to engage in mobilized political confrontation, in the latter, seemingly passive or depoliticized processes, guarantee not only the survival of these groups but also the continuation of their pursuits to produce their own space (2004). Such process might even be supported by the government- in order to unburden their public responsibility towards their citizens- maintaining they remain depoliticized (Bayat 2010). Similar contexts of authoritarian systems were direct confrontation and overt disobedience- as the case in western contexts- is rather considered as a hindering factor not a productive one. Yip reveals in his discussion on urban activism in China:

“In non-democratic regimes, the use, or the threat, of repression, is ubiquitous and remains a constant risk for anyone who advocates policies which are not sanctioned by the authorities. In this respect, the freedom to solicit and mobilize resources for social movements cannot be assumed, and instead, “resources that may be used to oppose the regime are difficult to acquire” (Osa & Schock, 2007, p. 124). Hence, mobilizing resources against the will of the state would still be an uphill battle.”(Yip 2019, p.225)

Second and concomitant to the first aspect, these practices are not necessarily adopted by *collective groups*. Rather, they might intentionally avoid forms of collective dissidence and mobilized confrontations. Meaning, they do not aim to act on a strategic level, staging opposition to prevailing authorities (Iveson 2007). As mentioned before in the previous chapter, they are “[...] *collective actions of noncollective actors*” (Bayat 2010, p.14), in other terms they are actions taken by heterogeneous groups (urban poor, women and youth) or rather individuals but nonetheless share a common horizon-referred to as “*nonmovements*”⁹⁸ (Bayat 2010). Similar to other urban activism practices, the ability of “*nonmovements*” to affect urban change is often questioned, given that they rely on small-scale individual efforts.

⁹⁸ For further details on the difference between social movements and *nonmovement*, refer to (Bayat 2010, p.19-20)

Yip provides a detailed description of this notion in the context of China which finds striking resembles in the case of Cairo:

“The local state authorities in small inland cities may tolerate moderate networked organizations in their city because they could seek help from them to compensate for their inadequate political and administrative capacity to maintain stability in their neighborhoods. However, any move to form a wider coalition would risk alarming the more resourceful upper authorities and provoking a reaction from the repressive regime” (Yip 2016, p.237-238).

While not collectively up-scaling their activism on a wider scale, yet, borrowing from informal urbanism as a mode of practice, Bayat asserts, since these singular actions follow the same logic and are employed by millions of ordinary citizens, their impact on urban change is in fact augmented (2010). In addition, while individuals tend to avoid sharing their resources and strategies with others (for example street vendors do not share their territory with other co-street vendors, in order to appear scarce and decrease risk of getting caught by the government), nevertheless, they act collectively when faced with threats or when the state is absent or weakened by national threats (Bayat 2010). In the view of this research, their collectivity lies in adopting the space patterns rather than the pre-coordination of various groups to collectively confront the state.

CHAPTER 08

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 Concluding statements in relation to the central question and theoretical approach of the research

The conceptual underpinnings of *public-making* are wide-ranging; the contemporary variant in Cairo introduces **an alternative that bears unprecedented features in relation to Downtown Cairo**, even if not wholly new.

- The momentum produced by the revolution transformed Downtown Cairo into a field of experimentation by various groups.
- Existing context-specific aspects in Downtown (e.g. diversity and informality) enabled the emergence of alternative practices. In addition to being reinforced by the ephemeral experience of Tahrir square, this awakened a sense of solidarity and motivation among young groups in order to induce change.
- The know-how of young professional groups and their capacity to negotiate and expand their network, combined by their sense of social responsibility and desire to induce change played a significant role in the process.
- The authoritarian nature of the state and the dominance of neoliberal policies have been pushing young people to embrace new forms for self-expression and self-governance.
- The transformations occurred might not be entirely visible, yet, they are lived realities that changed the way people understand and interact with the built

environment. In this dissertation it has been shown how Downtown's urban space, while already heterotopic, yet, it has become the site of alternatives to new groups.

- While the case studies have different concerns and employ different modes of *public-making*, they are representative of an emerging practice in Cairo and illustrate the variegated spatiality of *publicness*. Through the production process of *publicness*, Downtown Cairo's urban space played a key role, either
 - *as a venue to be re-appropriated for counter-cultural production*
 - *as a tool to counter the established mode of practice*
 - *as a platform with a variety of opportunities for subaltern groups to represent their own image of Downtown*

Looking at these cases, as urban planners, widens our understanding of **the role of the city** as a *totality* in providing various groups with different opportunities for initiating “*counter-projects*” (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]).

- This was achievable through combining urban space with other elements (*actents*) (e.g. mutual interests, type of activity, historical significance, ownership, online platforms...etc.) in different relationships.
- *Publics* tend to seek out different venues and their goals evolve through the process. In the making of these *publics*, social-spatial, cultural and historical aspects of urban space were cardinal.
- They are also predicated on the effects of a temporal moment- the revolution in 2011- making them more vulnerable as regimes grow tighter.

Therefore, the spatial and contextual aspects of how, where, and which kinds of concerns and negotiations these *publics* engage with are crucial.

Conceptually, when looking at processes of counter-production, it is central to question *counter to what*; by situating the *form of action* in relation to *the context*, we would be able to identify its revolutionary and transformative potential. As shown in the empirical work;

- *Public-making* is by its very nature temporal and tied to the urban context in which it takes form.
- As shown in the case studies the struggles over *public-making* in the city are not majorly affected by the state designated public urban space.
- It became evident that urban spaces, where the action directly took place are not the sole venues in the making and re-making of these publics; other types of venues (e.g. other places in the city, online platforms, media, publications, and screenings) are as much involved in this process.
- The groups involved in these practices merge and remerge on the bases of their shared concerns and thus, different actors take on new roles depending on the process they are involved in.
- Under such conditions, *negotiations* as a tool has the power to determine how urban space can be differently used, lived and experienced- keeping in mind the questions of *for what and by whom*.

Accordingly, this calls for shifting our focus from the existing lines of inquiry on public space as a pre-identified and fixed spatiality, towards understanding different forms of *public-making*, and their relationship to the city (Iveson 2007). As designers and urban planners, this requires that we consider the crucial role that other groups play in the making of the city that continues to be adapted in unexpected ways through use and appropriation. It particularly highlights the openness and adaptability of the urban space and more importantly the intrinsic link between the materiality of urban space and its relation to other social, economic and political aspects and their varying situatedness (Farías 2009).

8.1.1 Reflections on the right to the city and urban justice debates

Before looking at the implications of the findings of this research in relation to the border discourse on the Right to the city and urban justice, it is important to consider the following two points:

- It is important to point out that while the discussions of key scholars such as David Harvey and Susan Fainstein – referred to in the section below- tend to be focused on the context of democratic systems, yet, the cases of this research unfold in a non-democratic context. Nonetheless, the pertinence of their ideas and debates lie not in the similarity of the political context but rather in the similarity of dominating profit-oriented development and the neoliberal urban trends that could be found in the context of Cairo as well.
- Although the cases analyzed here are not themselves a case of social movement, yet, they are inspired and could be considered as a consequence of a social movement (Bayat, A. 2010), or an ” *urban-based political movement* ” (Harvey, D. 2012, p.117)

The main risk of the emerging phenomenon in Cairo is that as challenges accumulate, they might start to be profit-oriented and eventually lead to gentrification or become too radical that they are shut down by the state, in that sense keeping a balanced equation between both poles is intrinsic to their survival. It becomes clear that fear of commodification, gentrification and evacuation lurk around the borders of the analyzed initiatives. It is argued that while bottom-up urban interventions offer some innovative design solutions on a small-scale, nonetheless, it does not provide a holistic vision that could counter the neoliberal urban development trends (Bernner 2015).

Spontaneous small-scale urban interventions are not necessarily revolutionary or potential alternative to current urban planning approaches. Not only since some of these interventions already work in neoliberal context, but also because, the individual efforts of urban activism cannot possibly counter the current neoliberal urban development (Iveson 2013). Similarly, Bernner argues against the ability of one single approach of urban development to address the merits of today’s urban challenges in our mega-cities.

As such, realizing an alternative for the neoliberal urbanism through the sole adoption of tactical approaches to urbanism is unrealistic (2015). In addition, he questions the limitations of design solutions to create a progressive politics since only with a new form of urban governance together with the physical re-appropriation of urban spaces could urban activism result in a large-scale socio-spatial transformation (Bernner 2015).

In this regards, the potentiality of current urban interventions in creating a new urban strategy is of an undeniable significance, accordingly, the focus ought to be on how could urban activism form “*new urban politics*” (Iveson 2013; Purcell 2002). Purcell elaborates that the significance of the *right to the city* theory lies not in providing a fully envisioned project as an alternative for current cities, but it encourages us to question the status quo and re-think a “*new urban politics of the inhabitant*” (Purcell 2002, p.100), one that carries the possibilities of producing *differential* space (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]). Thus,

“[...] *the right to the city is not a suggestion for reform, nor does it envision a fragmented, tactical, or piecemeal resistance. [Lefebvre’s] idea is instead a call for a radical restructuring of social, political, and economic relations, both in the city and beyond. In other words it is about restructuring the power relationships*” (Purcell 2002, p.101).

The issue of articulating what the right to the city might entail and dilemma between radical changes versus reform, is also discussed from a different point of view by Harvey. Harvey considers the uprisings, in 2011, seen in the central squares of Cairo, Madrid, Athens, Barcelona and New York as “*a fleeting moment of irruption [that revealed] the possibilities of collective action to create something radical different*” (2012, p.xvii). Nonetheless, in Harvey’s view current urban movements are not strongly organized to achieve efficient results. Thus, for these movements to be efficient, there is a need for a “*global struggle*” that matches the scale of current urbanization trends (Harvey, D. 2008).

Despite the key insights offered by these arguments, nonetheless, limiting the potential power of bottom-up initiatives to induce change on the premises of their ability to employ direct confrontation and collective disobedience to the exiting dominating systems (Bernner 2015; Iveson 2013; Purcell 2013; Mayer 2009) situates the dynamics of such

cases within the frame of state versus people (Mould 2014). The underlying difference between empowering the prevailing dominating system⁹⁹ and working towards an alternative system is an important difference to acknowledge. Nevertheless, working within the existing systems does not necessarily dismisses the political relevance of these initiatives or deem them as co-opted. This dichotomy limits the *right to the city* (Lefebvre (1996) [1968]) into a single issue rather than approach it in its complex form- as a *totality* (Marcuse 2009). This view is clearly articulated and advocated by Fainstein in her discussions on the just city.

“An important difference between my view and David Harvey’s is that I am willing to embrace reform through existing political-economic processes rather than viewing greater justice as unattainable under capitalism” (Fainstein,S. 2014, p. 12).

Fainstein agrees with Harvey’s view in terms of the significance of achieving justice in the city and the implications of contemporary urban strategies in causing injustice, as she explains, the more urban public policies grew fonder of Neoliberalism, the more the need for identifying strategies that address the inequality and social exclusions in the city increased. This has given *justice* a precedent position in evaluating and measuring public policy than the benefit-factor advocated by utilitarianism. Nonetheless, she deviates from the Marxist position in her belief that alternative institutional relationships-what she refers to as *“nonreformist reforms”* (Mitchell, D. 2011) have the potential to achieve transformational change even when they work under capitalism (Fainstein, S. 2014). In addition, she emphasizes that in order to realize justice in the city; people should have a vision of what it entails and how to realize it. She holds the view that planners should not be merely mediators, but should take active roles in relation to decision making and hold a more normative position; favour policies that benefit low-income and minority groups, while blocking projects that are profitable for the already well-off (Mitchell, D. 2011).

⁹⁹ particularly in the case of Cairo non-democratic systems combined with profit-oriented urban trends

- Accordingly, based on findings of this research, it could be argued that exerting efforts towards the *right to the city* and urban justice involves both working against the system but also negotiating with the system, which does not necessarily entail succumbing to it. As emphasized by Lefebvre:

“The quest for a 'counter-space' overwhelms the supposedly ironclad distinction between 'reform' and 'revolution'. Any proposal along these lines, even the most seemingly insignificant, shakes existing space to its foundations, along with its strategies and aims” (1991 [1974], p. 383).

8.2 Lessons learned in terms of the research application

The **methodological approach** adopted in the research provided an opportunity for an in-depth understanding of the current practices in Downtown post-2011, choosing a diversity of cases provided a broader understanding of the phenomenon. While adopting a flexible approach during the data collection and data analysis enabled the researcher to gain insights in the case studies and helped in treating each case with the uniqueness it bears, yet, it have also made the researcher more aware of the necessity to maintain an objective position in the interpretation of the data and evaluation of the findings in relation to the questions.

Therefore, combing an adaptive approach guided by the line of thinking of ANT approach and methods assemblage (situational analysis and process analysis) with a robust structured approach (qualitative content analysis) helped in achieving a balance in the data analysis process. While the former allows the researcher to be immersed in the data and benefit from the flexibility of the tool in order to link new relationships, the latter have proven to be a useful tool in relating the findings to the main objectives and inquiries of the research during the final phase of the data interpretation. The limitation of this approach however is that it does not provide evidence that the cases studies analyzed are representative on the level of the whole city, yet they are indicative of the type of

patterns that emerged post-2011. This however would not be considered a challenge in relation to the research since the main objective was to shed a light on a newly emerging phenomenon and provide a detailed account on some of the cases rather than conduct a comparative analysis that would aim to identify a common typology as a representative of existing patterns.

The chosen **conceptual framework** have proven to be useful for this research, since it offered a way to analyze different process in order to answer the same research question, particularly in terms of their relationship to urban space. One of the main advantages of the conceptual approaches adopted in the research pertains to avoiding dualistic conceptualization. For example, based on Iveson's and Massey's reading of de Certeau's *tactics* and *strategies*, it could be argued that *counter-public actions* are not exclusive to *tactical* actions as their only form of action. Massey explains, both (*tactics* and *strategies*) are forms of powerful actions and should not be put in a binary opposition, where strategy is attributed to the powerful intuitions and tactics are attributed to the weak or marginalized. For de Certeau, while *strategies* "produce" and "impose" space, *tactics* "[...] can only use, manipulate and divert those spaces" (de Certeau 1984, p.30). Massey argues that, *power* and *resistance* (tactical action) have an inseparable relation (Massey 2005, p.45), since *resistance* does not stand against *power*, but rather is considered as a *form of power* (Dovey 2010).

Similarly, Iveson does not exclude *strategies*, from the various forms of *counter-practices* in the city. For him *strategies* might be rendered as a counter-social practice, depending on their context (Iveson 2007), While de Certeau's conceptualization of *strategies* aimed at presenting the form of action that is undertaken, by the state or private institutions, in order to control space and separate it from its context, it does not necessarily mean that *strategies* as a *form of action* is exclusive to powerful institutions, or the state. Furthermore, rather than limiting the scope of *counter-practices* to certain forms of actions, *counter-practices* are considered as such if they challenge the norm, or question the conventional mode of production. Accordingly, people could shift between *strategic* and *tactical* actions for the *public-making*.

8.3 Transferability

Some accounts revealed how dominating powers are increasingly focused on gaining ‘ground-up’ knowledge on the cultural practices that make up the complexity and uncertainty of urban space in developing countries, particularly the Middle East (Kanna 2012). As such, while the cultural activities of middle-class groups might not take a precedent priority in the face of the urban challenges that comes with a significant population growth and economic crisis, nonetheless, this argument indicates the role cultural activities plays in empowering various social groups in Middle Eastern cities; a notion that finds affinity with the *cry* (against alienation) and *demand* (for basic needs) entailed in Lefebvre’s *right to the city* (Marcuse 2009). In that sense contrary to accounts that dismisses these activities as depoliticized, making their thoughts and modes of practices *public* is political, since, the *struggle to make something public is a struggle for justice*” (Benhabib 1992, p.94).

While most insurgent urbanism practices, that are considered ‘truly revolutionary’ in its practice tends to be anti-government and stage their dissent (Harvey 2013), mainly influenced by Marxist ideologies; the practices found in the Egyptian context, to a certain extent, are always attempting to create a dialogue with the authorities and compel them to renew their methods.

This brings use to a certain uniqueness of the Arab uprisings of 2011, articulated by Bayat. Most revolutions that preceded the Arab uprisings of 2011, in the 20th century in different parts of the world, up till the 1990s, were mainly influenced by one of three ideologies- anti-colonial nationalism, Marxism and Islamism- consecutively (Bayat 2010). Although the underlying principles and beliefs of each ideology are different, yet they all shared the same aspect; adopted *revolution* (under the tenets of different ideologies) as a strategy bearing high hopes for radical change, yet failing in achieving their goals and at times suffering extreme results (2013). Bayat explicates, the era of the recent uprisings witnessed in the Arab world, occurred in a time, where the notion of revolution and its power have proven limited and arguably invalidated. “[...] *the desire was for reform, or meaningful change within the existing political arrangements*” (*ibid*, p. 58). Thus, the Egyptian revolution resembles Raymond Williams’s notion of “*The Long*

Revolution". A particularly long and complex process, that does not aim for political-economic change but imperatively social and cultural transformations as well and could possibly show true progress in twenty years (Bayat 2013). This account finds affinity with Fainstein's approach of *nonreformist reform* (2014), as mentioned in the previous section.

As such, the patterns and processes analyzed in this research, in terms of the kind of efforts exerted by the collectives found in the case studies could be partially transferable in similar contexts, if they are driven by slightly different philosophical underpinnings and goals that find ways in incorporating non-capitalist principals but still function under the capitalist system.

8.4 Further research

Gaining a better understanding of the vital role materiality plays in various production processes of *publicness* in the city, invites us to further focus on developing creative and context-specific analytical tools that bring to the front, invisible, yet, key relationships and elements involved in urban processes. This also demands looking at the implications of these new tools, in order to register their benefits and overcome their challenges. More importantly we need to ask in which way does the findings gained from using these new tools expand or complement to our knowledge and understanding of the urban and how does it differ from already existing tools? This research focused on understanding a newly emerging phenomenon in Cairo that is still not fully understood and its impact is also yet to be known. The lessons learned invites us to ask What kind of city, urban space or socio-spatial arrangement provides better opportunities for different groups? As such, this research calls for further studies that attempt to evaluate the impact of this phenomenon on other areas in Cairo. Particularly, the potential of the specific type of space these initiatives adopted (alleyways, hidden etc.) to produce *publicness* is could be needs to be further understood and explored, in addition to its relationship and difference to the so called public open spaces. Further comparative studies between different contexts, both within the global south and western contexts, are needed, in order to better understand similarities and differences of the broader frame of this phenomenon and its implications on the global level.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview guide

1. Themes related to process qualitative evaluation

1.1 Brief of the project: the way they came up with the idea, they identified the potentials of a space, choose a location, looked for funding

Themes	Questions
location (Downtown) (Interview)	Why did you choose Downtown Cairo? Did you make other projects here? What? Did you work on the same kind of projects in other districts? What are the different aspects that you could notice, in terms of people’s sense of place?
Public space in downtown Cairo (Interview)	What do you think are the most significant changes that you can notice in public space in the last 3 years, in terms of use of p.s. and public life? How would you describe the state of public space in downtown Cairo? <i>What are the major difference between this project and the renovation/pedestrianization project of Al Alfy street, by the state?</i> Which projects in public space do you think are worth noticing? How would you describe the state-designated public space in Cairo?
Idea of the project (Interview)	How did you come up with the idea of this project? What was your main aim of this project? What kind of users/use did you expect to use the space and what kind of users/use where not expected? <i>(Initiative 3: Which project did you start with Philips or Kodak and why? (Initiative 2: what made you think of a second additional use of that space? Why did you choose this use?</i>
type of space for the project (Interview)	Why did you choose this specific site for your project? What are the main physical potentials that you would not find in other “public spaces”? <i>(Omar Nagati) you once mentioned that passage ways is a manifestation of the constant state of negotiations over space, what are the lessons you could learn from this aspect of space in your design process?</i>
Funding (Interview)	How did you manage to get funding? Did you try other funding sources?

1.2 Procurement: the way in which they identified key actors, thought of the possible ways to engage the inhabitants. Short-term-long-term plans. Value aspects.

<p>The mode of operation/application (Interview)</p>	<p>When planning this project what were you short-term plans? Did you have long term plans? What are the measurements that you took to prioritize use value of space than exchange value of space? <i>You said “But Ismaelia were not so supportive of the Philips renovations, and not shy to admit it either”, in which way did this have an impact on your practice in the project in comparison to the Kodak passageway? How did you manage to convince them, what win-win situation did you picture to them? Did you get a permission from the government? Did you have to scarify something or change something to get the permission? Did you try to implement this project before?</i></p>
<p>Detecting Change in the mode of practice (Interview)</p>	<p>Speaking of the mode of practice, what are the main aspects that changed in the practice of your field, in the last 4 years? How do you think it is influencing the current situation, in terms of practicing your field? If familiar with (DIY urbanism, tactical urbanism...etc.) would you describe your practice relevant to those concepts, in which way? What are the differences between those other practices and your mode of practice, with regard to the context of Cairo?</p>

1.3 Planning: way in which team developed and refined the design, including space planning, identifying the needs, limits financial capacity.

<p>Physical space (Interview)</p>	<p>Who had a stronger voice in the planning phase, in terms of identified needs? How far were the inhabitants able to take part in the planning process? <i>How did you come up with the design idea?</i> Did you think of introducing new uses to the space? What characteristics did you intend to preserve in the space? Why? What aspects of design did you use to support preserving those characteristics? If you had more financial support, which are the design aspects that you would change?</p>
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Implementation: way in which the Implementation phase until the launch was managed

<p>Implementation (Interview)</p>	<p>In which way did the inhabitants take part in the implementation process? Did you have any visits from government officials? Was there any supervision from the gov.</p>
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	side? Any technical problems that led to plan-B? Did the inhabitants provide any support in terms of light for working in the night, or water, or storage space...etc.?
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1.4 Reflection of the phase: way in which final adjustments and reflections

Handover (Interview)	What are the things that you were careful to record in terms of the different phases in the process? What challenges did you become aware of and how did you try to overcome them in the other project?
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1.5 Occupation and operational management: last-minute problems changes and the management way of the occupied space

The first minutes of use (Interview)	At the opening day what are the most significant ways the people used the space? Did the inhabitants take part in this event? Did those uses lead you to make any final adjustments because of any un-expectations?
Operational management (Interview) and (Observation)	Did you hand over maintenance responsibilities to the inhabitants and shop owners? Did you come up with any maintenance management plan? Is a permission to use this space for cultural events or any kind of social gatherings? Who manages the types of the events and the time plans that would take place there? Who is responsible for managing any conflicts with the different neighbors on how to use the space?

***Additional question:** do you have any photos or recommended sources that I should check, people I should interview or other initiatives I should visit?

Appendix B: Observation guide

Structure below presents the type of data collected in the site visits

2. Themes in the functional performance qualitative evaluation

How well does the “urban space” support the intended “public address” and the achievement of the initiative’s aspirations?

Aesthetic and image (Observation and informal-conversation)	Iconic, representations, symbolic, powerful , the atmosphere of the place
Physical settings (Observation)	Scale, (in)visibility, flexibility and adaptability, relationships, geometrical relationships of the space and their relationship to the psychological impact on the user (complemented by methods form Jan Gehl observational methods)
Comfort (Observation)	Security, safety, micro-climate, do they spend a longer time, doing “ <i>optional activities</i> ” (complemented by methods form Jan Gehl observational methods)
Amenity (Observation)	Service and equipment the existing furniture foster or suppress the intended use and the diversity of optional unintended use? (complemented by methods form Jan Gehl)
Serviceability (obsv. and informal-conversation)	Cleaning and routine maintenance
Operational costs (obsv. and informal-conversation)	How do they get money to maintain this place?

Appendix C: Session structure of field observation

Sample of Observation session to cover the functional performance

Observation number	
street name	Initiative name
Location (street, passageway, street corner, sidewalk) traditional open space (square, main street)	Type of initiative (designed open space/art, alternative café, activity space/temporary intervention)
Date	
State-designated use	Purpose of initiative
<p>Activity in room/space(note any activities at the time of the review)Who is present? Inhabitants, visitors, passerby, customer? Unexpected users? What is their relation to that space? How did they enter that space? What is happening? What are people doing or saying? Is it an optional? Work or recreation? Or passing by? When does this activity occur? What is its relationship with other activities? Where is it happening? What part do the physical surroundings contribute to what is happening? Why is this happening? What precipitate to the event? What contribute to things happening this way? How is the activity organized? How are the elements related? Who is there but is not using the space? Who is using the space differently than "normal"? How? Alternative justification for using the space (double use)? Any aspect of silent language from any of the groups? Contested relation with different users? Do they talk to each other? Any interesting thing than "normal" that attracted people to stop by a look at? Which uses are still active in the night?</p>	
<p>Activity in room/space (if room vacant at time of review note from observation what might happen in it)</p>	
<p>Description of the room/space: the borders of the space, height of the buildings, length of the walls, windows from above, openings within the space, size or scale, vegetation, movable or fixed furniture, what is missing for the intended use? Is it too warm? Is it calm or noisy? A lot of edges dividing the space or blurry edges? Any features added by the users? Any common elements used by the popular inhabitants and the owners or users of the art space? (In) visible? (Note unusual/unexpected features) iconic element? Representative elements of a period of time? Representative elements of social class?</p>	
<p>User/shop owners comments: who takes care of the vegetation's if exists, who cleans the space? What do they miss in that space? What elements they don't like? ownership? What can you do here but not where else? Why? What changed in your work, since this initiative started here? Did you know about the initiative before it began? What do they think of this project? Are you having more difficulty to find customers? Do your customers comment on this initiative when they come here? What do they say? Have you had any problem from the visitors of the initiative?</p>	

Appendix D: Coding Book

Coding used in the analysis, conducted via QDA Miner Lite software

2- Spatial Category

- Accessible/open
- calm/empty place
- crowded place (users-uses)
- fixed objects
- Hidden space
- Morphological significance
- Other Material used
- passageway
- spatial boundary/location
- Street
- unfixed objects
- Vacant space/available space

2-Challenge

- Financial Challenge
- Dominating System
- conflicting agendas
- limited

2-characteristic/symbolic/non-tangible

- atmosphere
- divers activities
- divers social mix
- Significance/potential
- Surveillance.

2-Everyday activities

- checking the shops in Downtown
- hanging out in the place
- passing by
- serving in a coffee shop
- street vending
- working at an office in Downtown
- locals checking others

2-Objectives

- circulating an idea/msg
- counter action/alternative
- gaining profit
- inducing change
- introducing something new
- Networking
- provide opportunity

2-Ownership

- Privately owned Space
- publicly owned space

2-process

- cumulative on the experience before
- Growing/ expanding
- Mode of application/practice

2-professional/ know-how practices

- art Intervention/performance
- design practice/planning
- documentation/observation/research
- film making

perspectives of actors involved

- position of co-founder about Gentrification
- Position of Private sector
- position of the people
- Position of the co-founder
- role of authority

- Graffiti
- journalism/investigation

2-public-making practices

- Debating/discussing
- organizing event
- Publishing
- Screening

2-Role

- everyday user
- funding source
- mediator/facilitator
- permitting
- supporting

2-social interaction

- cooperating in a project non-gov. prof.
- informal agreement between diff. groups

2-stakeholders

- active groups
- Experts/Intellectuals
- groups of informal economy
- Government
- Initiative's team
- New comers
- non-governmental
- Private sector
- local users/inhabitants/(local shop owners)

2-state's rules of conduct

- censorship issue
- prohibiting Photography
- prohibiting street performance/cultural events
- public gathering restricted

2-Time/Temporality

- 2-3 years change
- before 2011
- since 2011
- temporal event/change
- arrival of new groups to Downtown.
- emergence of new initiatives/activities
- reactivation of existing activities
- current situation-
- after 2013/early 2014

3-Concepts

- counter-hegemonic practice
- incremental change
- informal/informal interface
- non-normative use
- private (power relation)
- public (power relation)
- strategic power
- tactical power

Background about the (INITIATIVE)

- activities
 - Challenge of Initiative
 - Intended role
 - current outcomes
 - mission/Concern
 - mode of application
 - Objectives of Initiative
- ### Before initiation
- attempts Pre-2011

ACADEMIC BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHOR

M.Sc. Sara Abdelaal holds a bachelor's degree in Architecture from El Shorouk Academy; Higher Institute for Engineering in Cairo, Egypt and a master's degree in Urban Management from the Technical University in Berlin, Germany, in 2013. Her master's thesis focused on analyzing the Rural-Urban linkages between the capital city of Oman, Muscat, and the neighboring village Fanja, under the topic "*Rural-Urban linkages for a Sustainable Oman: The Case study of Fanja*". Her master's thesis was part of the research project "*Sustainable Urbanization Patterns in Oman*", carried out by GUTech (German University of Technology in Muscat) and SQU (Sultan Qabous University) and financed by the (TRC) the research council in Muscat, Oman.

After her master, she continued working as a research assistant in Berlin on the same research Project. In 2014 she joined the international conference, "*21st Century Challenges for Urbanization in the Arab Gulf Countries*" held on the 23rd -25th of March in 2014, at the GUTech, German University of Technology in Muscat, Oman, where she presented her work as part of the Panel, *Trends and Driving Forces: Understanding Urbanization and Sustainability*, with the presentation title "*Urbanization patterns within a new rural-urban interface*". She is also a co-author in the book "*Urban Oman: Trends and Perspectives of Urbanisation in Muscat Capital Area*", edited by Sonja Nebel und Aurel Richthofen and published in 2016.

In April 2016 Sara Abdelaal joined the Graduate School for Urban Studies (URBANgrad) at the Department of Architecture at the Technical University in Darmstadt. Her Ph.D research project is mainly focused on understanding how several independent urban initiatives in Downtown Cairo emerged since the uprisings of 2011, in Egypt and the implication of this process on transforming the production of *publicness* in Downtown Cairo. Her Ph.D. title "*Beyond Public Space: Negotiating Power for Public-Making in Downtown Cairo*".