

## The Heart of the City from a Socio Cultural Perspective

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### 1 ABSTRACT

Ontological city planning theories suggest that the definition and location of the city heart (AKA CBD and City Center) is the geographically centered, economically based, and activity vibrant spot of the city. In Cairo, the heart has applied this actuality since its foundation in 969 AD, and has moved or transformed and changed size and location with every major shift in Cairo's planning milestones. However, January 2011 revolution in Egypt has identified a new parameter to the theory of the deteriorated heart; suggesting a new hypothesis: "the heart of the city is related to socio-cultural attributes rather than to the physical planning measures". Incidents of the revolution and its consequences and aftereffects are changing both the society and the urbanism at a fast pace. The question in debate here is: How can urban planning improve Cairo's resilience to political and social changes caused by the upheaval era we are living in? How can we make use of this transitional period towards an urban democracy of our victorious city?

The paper at hand aims at answering the preceding questions. It aims at introducing a differentiation between the CBD and the heart of the city as well as proposes some recommendations for its public spaces development. Its methodology is based on a review of the concept of the heart through a chronological review of the case of Cairo. Arguing the validity of the theory, the paper moves to showcasing the urban status of its major public spaces that are used as revolution and demonstration "hearts". Discussion of the cases is expected to shed light on some basic considerations needed to react to our fast changing City.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

While cities continue to grow, real knowledge of their evolution is tied with the study of social science. For the complexity of the urban life can never be explained without a complete analysis of the economic and social processes. This is our duty if we are to regulate the physical world. Works of Marx, Simmel, Freud, Weber and Wagner emphasized the preceding ideas since the first quarter of the twentieth century. In the last quarter of the century, Peter Hall and McLoughlin accentuated on the urge of a different kind of knowledge in order to accommodate the design of cities, and to improve the lives of their people. Zukin points to the significance of culture in the creation of urban forms, while Boyer explains that the production of built environment is part of the material production of society (Boyer, 1984). Moholy-Nagy wrote that cities, like men, are embodiments of the past, and mirages of unfulfilled dreams. They thrive on economy and waste, on exploitation and charity, on the initiative of the ego and the solidarity of the group. They stagnate and ultimately die under imposed standardization, homogenized equality, renewing themselves unit by unit in a slow time bound metabolic process. Society is therefor the determining factor in urbanization (Nagy, M. 1968).

We must return then to the economic and political, cultural and social contexts as pillars of the spatial morphology and building typology of the city. The city thus, is a text that can be read as a system of differences or fragments that bear a loose or indeterminate relation to each other. Since these texts are all constructions following certain laws, then they can also be deconstructed and therefore understood (Cuthbert, 2006). Indeed many cosmopolitan cities have undergone cultural and urban transformations, however, and despite any development or move of the CBD, there is always a constant fact; which is the urban essence of its heart. Along the history of Cairo, the heart has moved or transformed and changed size and location with every major shift in the city's planning milestones. From the old gated Fatimid city center, to the Ottoman center, to the Khedivial "West El Balad" (downtown) for over a century regarded as "Paris of the East" or the "Golden Age", to its fractioning to Heliopolis in the East and to Mohandessin in the West, and then out of the city fringes: to New Cairo and to 6th of October city as multinational business hubs with a change from the boulevards to the campus form. The original city has become a multiple city, and so its center was divided. Along with the journeys, an immigration of city dwellers with every political regime has led to decentralization and a defragmentation of the CBD to new downtowns as a natural consequence formulating an urban enigma. Each and every newer center always attracted the top of the Cairene social pyramid class, leaving the older heart to lower societal classes to enjoy the left overs of buildings and public spaces. However, the Cairo phenomenon I would like to highlight here is the revivification of the old Khedivial

downtown with January 25th revolution in 2011, introducing a knot in the urban logic. For in the large square that has long belittled into a central geographical node, since its fragmentation in the eighties (more than a quarter of a century ago) has accommodated millions of Egyptians for an uninterrupted 18 days with a continuum to date. Tahrir square (epic of the Khedivial downtown) and its surroundings has overnight been transformed into the heart of the country- not only Cairo; an Agora, a hide park speakers' corner and a sit-in as well as a camping site, in addition to Egypt's ultimate demonstration center. Every one was welcomed in the square; politicians, intelligencia, students, families, elite, scientists, officials, the urban poor and even criminals, homeless and street children. A new hypothesis can now be debated, that is: the CBD might be the geographical and economic center of a city, but the heart is related to socio-cultural attributes rather than to the physical measures.

### 3 A CHRONOLOGICAL REVIEW

Literature defines the CBD or the Central Business District as the focal point of a city. It is the commercial, office, retail, and cultural center and usually is the center point for transportation networks. Usually typified by a concentration of retail and office buildings. Also called a central activities district, is the commercial and often geographic heart of a city, also referred to "downtown" or "city center" (Gosling, D. & Maitland B. 1984).

The term "city place" is similar to CBD serving the same purpose for the city, and both are marked by a higher-than-usual urban density as well as often having the tallest buildings in a city. City center differs from downtown in that the latter can be geographically located anywhere in a city, while a city center is generally located near the geographic heart of the city. London arguably has three city centers; the City of London, the medieval City of Westminster and the transformed Docklands area. Mexico City also has more than one city center: Centro Histórico, the colonial; Paseo de la Reforma – Polanco the mid-late 20th century CBD, and Santa Fe, the new CBD. In Taipei, Taiwan, the area around its main railway station is regarded as the historic city center while the Xinyi Planned Area located to the east of the said railway station is the current CBD of Taipei and not only is it considered the financial district of Taipei, but it is arguably the premier shopping area in Taipei and Taipei's most modern cosmopolitan district. Taipei 101, Taipei's tallest building and currently the world's second tallest habitable skyscraper, is located in Xinyi Planned Area (Curthbert A.R. 2000, Mumford, Kostof, S. 1993).

The shape and type of a CBD or downtown almost always closely reflect the city's history. Cities with maximum building height restrictions often have a separate historic section quite apart from the financial and administrative district. In cities that grew up suddenly and more recently such as those in the western half of North America, a single central area will often contain all the tallest buildings. It has been said that downtowns (as understood in North America) are therefore a separate phenomenon. Central Business Districts usually have very small resident populations. For example, the population of the City of London declined from over 200,000 in the year 1700 to less than 10,000 today. In some instances, however (and particularly in large Australian and Canadian cities), CBD populations are increasing as younger professional and business workers move into city center apartments (Mumford 1966).

A chronological review illustrates how the CBD was initiated as the market square in ancient cities. On market days, farmers, merchants and consumers would gather in the center of the city to exchange, buy, and sell goods. This ancient market is the forerunner to the CBD. The basic ancient Roman plan consisted of a central forum with city services, surrounded by a compact, rectilinear grid of streets. To reduce travel times, two diagonal streets crossed the square grid, passing through the central square. Many European towns preserve the remains of these schemes. Later, Renaissance and Baroque were featured by one city type which for a century and a half: the „star-shaped city", with radial streets extend outward from a defined center of military, communal or spiritual power.

As cities grew and developed, CBD's became fixed location where retail and commerce took place. Typically at or near the oldest part of the city and is often near a major transportation route that provided the site for the city's location, such as a river, railroad, or highway, a center of finance and control or government as well as office space. In the early 1900s, European and American cities had CBD's that featured primarily retail and commercial cores. In the mid-20th century, the CBD expanded to include office space and commercial businesses while retail took a back seat. The growth of the skyscraper occurred in CBD's, making them more and more dense. In recent decades, the combination of residential expansions and

development of shopping malls as entertainment centers have given the CBD new life. One can now find, in addition to housing, mega-malls, theaters, museums, and stadiums. Pedestrian malls are also common nowadays in an effort to make the CBD a 24-hour a day destination. The CBD is often far more populated during the day than at night as relatively few workers live there and most do commute to their jobs around. By the beginning of the 21st century, the CBD had become a diverse region of the metropolitan area and included residential, retail, commercial, universities, entertainment, government, financial institutions, medical centers, and culture. Lawyers, doctors, academics, government officials and bureaucrats, entertainers, directors and financiers are often located at workplaces or institutions in the CBD (Kostof, S. 1993).

In 1933, the German geographer Walter Christaller has developed the “central place theory”, defining the central place, as it exists primarily to provide goods and services to its surrounding population. An attempt was to explain the reasons behind the distribution patterns, size and number of cities and towns around the world. Doing so, he attempted to provide a framework by which those areas can be studied both for historic reasons and for the locational patterns of areas today. Christaller further tested the theory in Southern Germany and came to the conclusion that people gather together in cities to share goods and ideas and that they exist for purely economic reasons (Christaller 1933). In 1954, German economist August Losch modified Christaller's central place theory creating an ideal consumer landscape. Both Losch's and Christaller's ideas are essential to studying the location of retail in urban areas today. This model is shown all over the world, from rural areas of England to the United States' Midwest or Alaska with the many small communities that are served by larger towns, cities, and regional capitals (Losch, A. 1954)

Back to the CBD, where the highest land value and the most valuable real estate in the city; core of the metropolitan area, would typically home to one of the city's tallest and most valuable skyscrapers. On the other hand, the convergence of road networks in the CBD often creates overwhelming traffic jams as commuters from the suburbs attempt to converge on the CBD in the morning and return home at the end of the workday. In recent decades, edge cities have begun to develop as suburban CBD's in major metropolitan areas. In some instances, these edge cities have become a larger magnet to the metropolitan area than the original CBD.

From retrospection, literature planning classics have identified the heart as the core of the city. In its “The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanization of Urban Life”, the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) has identified the heart as ‘the core’ as ‘an element that made the city a city as opposed to an aggregate of individuals’ (Sigfried Giedion), as ‘the meeting place of the arts’ (Le Corbusier), as ‘the repository of the community’s collective memory’ (J.M. Richards) as ‘natural expression of contemplation, quite enjoyment of body and spirit’ (Ernesto N. Rogers), as ‘background for spontaneity and feeling of processional development’ (Philip Johnson) and as ‘expression of the collective mind and spirit of the community’ (Jaqueline Tyrwhitt). Team X has further developed the concept of the heart in the 1950's (Geddes, P. 1949)

#### 4 THE CAIRO PHENOMENON

Along its history, Cairo has been and still is a challenge to the study of urban design. For its socio-cultural attributes were and still are in continuous transformation. Since its construction in 969 AD, its occupation by Fatimids (969-1171), then Ayubids (1171-1250), then Memluks (Baharis 1250-1382, Burjis 1382-1517), then Othomans (1517-1798), then Mohamed Aly, and his ancestors who drifted Cairo's culture and urbanism towards the French, the Italian and then the English (1805-1952). A disperse and liberalization of culture for one and a half century were abruptly suppressed by the nationalization policy (1961) after the July 1952 revolution, shifting culture and urbanism towards socialism/collectivism. Then Cairo's culture and urbanism were turned head over heels overnight with the open-door policies (1974). A loss of stability was a prologue for the privatization that accompanied the globalization with its underlying aspects of trans-bordered economics and media rebellion accentuated the multi-layered and accumulative ad-hoc's of Cairo's cultural identity and urbanism over the last thirty years. Tracking the changes on the map reveal that perception of its CBD is always associated by a socio-cultural change, rather than economic measures (Safey Eldeen, H. 2008). The mile stones can be identified in four milestones: 1. Before Mohamed Aly (969-1805), 2. Khedivial Cairo and the Belle Epoch (1863-1952), 3. Post 1952-Revolution, and 4. Cairo Today

Before and during the reign of Mohamed Aly, the unique urban fabric of Historic Cairo was a reflection of its social structure (Bianca, 2004). The heart was al-Mu'izz Lidin Illah Street – the Qasaba (Spine) of Fatimid Cairo, rooted in the principle of symbiotic interaction between the members of its community. The street, over one thousands years old and one kilometre long with dominant markets – besides residential – of specialised crafts and small trades of jewellery, copper, leather, clothes, herbs and other specialized goods and crafts. Each activity was located in a specific section of the street, along the different historic periods of the Fatimids, Ayyubids, Mamluks and Ottomans. User groups were well-to-do residents and merchants who have been replaced by a poorer working class community and a wave of emigrants from different Egyptian cities. Originally designed for pedestrians, horses and cattle, the narrow and sinuous street has been transformed into an over-populated typical residential/commercial activities in slow replacements of its authentic nature as the medieval local heart and market due to the change in demographic characteristics of its users (Abdel Hady, A., Nachar, E., & Safey Eldeen, H. 2011).

With the Haussmannian Cairo Project (Paris of the East) 1863-1907 witnessed a new down town when foreigners and élite began to invest heavily. Grand palaces and beautiful European style buildings were erected, outstanding squares were designed. French architects, assisted by Italian contractors and designers undertook the building of a pleasant mix of Neo-Classic, Art-Déco, Art-Nouveau, Baroque and a little later, Neo-Islamic styles (Mintti, 1999 & Hawas, 2002). Along its “Belle Epoque”, banks, insurance companies and wealthy individuals invested in blocks of flats. The very luxurious apartment buildings were then rented out as offices or private dwellings to a cosmopolitan élite careful to preserve the buildings in excellent shape. Later in the 1930's, downtown tenants abandoned their less fashionable address and transformed their flats into well-appointed offices for their own use or as an investment. Elegant boutiques provided shade with their colourful awnings to a selective clientele who preferred shopping in Cairo rather than in any European capital. Physicians, dentists, lawyers and accountants vied for clinics and offices in such prestigious surroundings. The metro project that has started in 1905 to link the capital downtown with the new suburb of Heliopolis has expanded to reach and link most of the city's districts. The increase in using motor private and transportation vehicles and the introduction of the bus as public transportation in 1935 in the newly paved urban roads have resulted in the expansion and maturity of the suburbs (Heliopolis 1905, Maadi and Hadaek El Qubba 1908, Dokki 1922). New urban suburbs were planned on modern aspects of urban design: Al Awkaf city, Makkattam, New Helwan, and Nasr City. The older districts have also swelled and increased in number of their inhabitants. Each district was significant for its urban character and identity, reflecting its user groups' cultural and socioeconomic features and sometimes nationalities or ethnicities (Safey Eldeen, H. 2010).

It is hypothesized that the beginning of the urban change in Cairo goes back to the late forties of the twentieth century. After WWII, an inflation of the land values and building costs as well as the wages of craftsmanship took place. Internal immigration constituted a housing problem for the middle and low classes. The poor districts went from pathetic to miserable. For the first time in Egypt, cemeteries acted as housing areas. The number of Cairene inhabitants doubled in only ten years (1939-1949). Cairo remained attractive until the mid century with the break of the 1952 revolution. Afterwards, the exodus of the foreign community hit hard at Cairo downtown. Its activities diminished, its boutiques no longer attracted the élite and its apartments were taken over by a social mobility that accompanied the nationalisation and centralisation. The user groups, the land uses, and the urban fabrics have changed. Shops changed ownership and indulged their own decorating schemes. Negligence in laws and regulations enforcement helped establishing commercial buildings into the neighbourhood, regardless of any aesthetic measures or considerations of the historic values of the buildings (Al-Ahram weekly, 2001). Parking problems, together with car exhaust fumes added to a misuse and a lack of maintenance of buildings and pavements. Decades of neglect by downtown landlords and tenants, precipitated by the migration of the expatriate community, and the succeeding departure of the upper classes, have left the ornate splendor of its lavish edifices mired in decay. Negligent enforcement of laws and regulations gave way to the entry of commercial establishments into the neighborhood, mostly with no regard to maintaining aesthetic harmony or preserving the historic buildings (Abdel Hady, A., Nachar, E., and Safey Eldeen, H. 2011).

## 5 CAIRO'S URBAN ENIGMA'S REFLECTION ON THE CBD

With the 1960 nationalization policy (laying hands on private projects), a centralization process has resulted in an unpredictable enlargement of the city master plan. Accompanied by a socioeconomic change of the Cairenes; a claim of eradication of the socioeconomic buffers has resulted in an allocation of the elite, and an advancement of the middle and lower middle classes, causing unsteadiness in the demographic map of Cairo. Rural immigrants, poor, and youngsters and unqualified class extensively worked in the capital, living on the margins and the peripherals of the city, composing the early urban slums and squatter settlements. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the same inflation of WWII was repeated. However, the results were more intense because of the migration of the canal cities habitants during the war. The new regime of the open-door policy that has started after the 1973 victory has shifted the administrative orientation towards capitalism. Coinciding with the exploration of oil in the gulf countries has resulted in a new reconstruction of the social classes and urban configuration of the city. A shift in the formulation of the middle class was witnessed. Neaveau-riche constituted a new social class, which has contributed to a new urban irrelevancy in the new districts and suburbs with their comeback from oil countries for homing upgrade. Apart, was a vast investment movement empowered by the political decision, contributing to a tremendous inflation and the emergence of new residential districts with new housing cultures. In the eighties, the gaps between socioeconomic groups have widened and the demographic structure has mingled. The housing projects could not cope with the pace of the housing need, leading to an entire urban deterioration all over the city. The squatter settlements then were estimated as an 85 % of the entire housing in Cairo. Blocks of flats were erected in place of private villas, or adjacent to villas in place of the gardens were sold. Cairene urban status was then described as spontaneous or "improvised" or "ad-hoc". A quick deterioration has spanned along the original older districts of the city because of over population, and lack of maintenance and renewal projects (Safey Eldeen, H. 2008).

In the early nineties, and after the political regime shifted its economy towards the privatization, the investment sector has swept like a flood, building its own residential compounds outside the borders of the city. Creating opportunities for the building sector to flourish and the demand of the out-side-the city new residential compounds to increase, creating a new inflation in the land prices, building costs and craftsmanship wages. From retrospection, the demand for houses for the poor classes became merely a need for shelter, which has resulted in the swelling of the older squatter settlements and the development of newer ones. The "modern" districts can be described as repellent, due to the urban mismanagement, defiance of laws and legislations and the defacement of urban standards (Sims, 2011).

During the last two decades, the desert land around Cairo has shown dramatic changes in its physical, cultural and social features. Starting as opportunities of desert land reclamations for the agricultural projects, the foundation of the ring road and several road conjunctions attracted many investors who started new housing projects hence, establishing new communities for upper middle class families, together with some educational, cultural, medical and commercial facilities (GOPP 1993). Those new communities are profit oriented and determined by land developers. Accordingly, a considerable portion of the socially higher population living in nearby overcrowded Cairo districts chose to move seeking a better quality of life in those new communities. In turn, this move imposed the extensive use of cars for long distances commuting to and from the city, with a limited availability of public transportation (Abdel-Hadi & Elazhary 2009). In 2008, Greater Cairo Region was expanded to include two more newly developed governorates, Helwan to the east and 6th of October to the southwest.

It is evident that the Khedivial downtown of the twenty first millennium Cairo has followed the ontological city planning theories suggest that the location of the city heart is the geographically centered, economically based, and activity vibrant spot of the city. The new CBD/City Center (or as we call: the downtown) it always attracted the top of the social pyramid class, leaving the old heart to lower societal classes to enjoy the left overs of buildings and public spaces. The entire downtown has witnessed the actual departure of head quarters, large shopping chains and hotels and A-class entertainment facilities. With every fracture or departure of the CBD, a rehabilitation of the user-groups is associated. Several studies, documentaries and even movies have tackled the issue of the deterioration of the urbanism of down town and the rehabilitation of its user-groups (ya'kubian building, banat west elbalad, and others). From a personal perspective, the area for us was avoided even for a pass by. Relying on the ring road, or hanged bridges penetrating Cairo, we-inhabitants of the fringes, visit downtown when it is extremely urgent. A trip that is always accompanied by

nostalgia for the days bygone and a dream of preservation of a suppressed genuine urban essence that most of the younger generations cannot perceive.

## 6 AL TAHRIR SQUARE IN REVOLT

Tahrir Square or “Liberation Square” is „the heart of the heart“ the major public square in Downtown Cairo. The square was originally called "Ismailia Square", after the 19th-century ruler Khedive Ismail, who commissioned the new downtown Hausmannean 'Paris on the Nile' or 'Paris of the East' design. After the Egyptian Revolution of 1919 the square became widely known as “Tahrir” Square. However the square was not officially renamed until the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, which changed Egypt from a kingdom into a republic. In 2011, the square was a focal point for the Egyptian Revolution. At the centre of the Square is a large and busy traffic circle. On the northeast side is a plaza with a statue of nationalist hero Omar Makram, and beyond is the his Mosque. The square is the northern terminus of the historic Qasr al-Ayni Street, the western terminus of Talaat Harb Street, and via Qasr al-Nil Street crossing its southern portion it has direct access to the Qasr al-Nil Bridge crossing the nearby Nile River. The area around Tahrir Square includes the Egyptian Museum, the former National Democratic Party (NDP) headquarters building, the Mogamma governmental building, the Headquarters of the Arab League building, the Nile Hotel, Kasr El Dobra Evangelical Church and the original campus of the American University in Cairo. The Metro serves Tahrir Square with the Sadat Station, which is the downtown junction of the system's two lines, linking to Giza, Maadi, Helwan, and other districts and suburbs of Greater Cairo. Its underground access viaducts provide the safest routes for pedestrians crossing the broad roads of the heavily trafficked square.

Like any city geographical and large sized center. Tahrir Square has been the traditional site for numerous major protests and demonstrations; 1977 Egyptian Bread Riots, and March 2003 protest against the War in Iraq. On Tuesday, 25 January 2011, millions of protesters from a variety of socio-economic and religious backgrounds demanded the overthrow of the regime of President Hosni Mubarak. The uprising took place in Cairo, Alexandria, Suez as well as in other cities in Egypt, following the Tunisian revolution. Three days later (Jan 28th) "Friday of Anger" protests began. Millions demonstrated in Cairo and other Egyptian cities after the Friday prayers. Later that night clashes broke out in Tahrir Square between revolutionaries and pro-Mubarak demonstrators, leading to the injury of several and the death of some. A curfew was declared, but was widely ignored as the flow of defiant protesters to Tahrir Square continued throughout the night. On February 2nd, 2011, violence escalated as waves of Mubarak supporters met anti-government protesters, and some rode on camels and horses into the Square, wielding swords and sticks. During the 18-days-revolution; every one was there in the square; politicians, intelligencia, students, families, elite, scientists, officials, the urban poor and even criminals, homeless and street children. World media and global names on regular basis to join the protestors. Despite Mubarak’s resignation on February 11th, thousands of protests have continued to gather and reside in Tahrir square. Although many pledged they would continue protesting until all the demands had been met. Since then- for more than two years, numerous “titled” Fridays demonstrations were held with demands or protests. From time to time police forces attempted to forcibly clear the square using tear gas, beating and shooting demonstrators, but protesters soon returned in more than twice their original numbers, and every now and then fierce fighting breaks out and continues through days and nights.

Eventually, with the continuum of Tahrir square occupation by camping protestors, and with the rate of violence increasing, the entrances and exists have been closed by concrete walls and up to date, turning the life of residents of the quarters to a night mare. More violence from the police and the army against the protestors and street gangs has intrigued a new type of demonstrations thus igniting the dreadful incidents of Mohamed Mahmoud and the Parliament Streets. Two more extremely drastic events in the Egyptian Contemporary history. More pessimistic environmental behaviour is witnessed and range from vandalism and violation of buildings, streets and public spaces. More drastic attitude has started in the sexual harassments and the frequent rape cases in addition to the pick pocketing and robbery, and the street fights that have become recurrent incidents in the Cairene street lately! The square and the adjacent streets have been then transformed into a shelter for the homeless, which threatens the residents and the users of the areas. Some accuse the reminiscent individuals of the former regime to make people against the revolution.

If Tahrir square has become the icon of the revolution and reflection/indication of the political and social changes in Egypt along two years. Evidently, small hearts have appeared have been characterized by cultural/social/behavioral features according the nature of their location and the background and orientations

of the residents of theirs, or because of the activities and land use. The node of Mostafa Mahmoud in Mohandesin Area that has been founded and flourished in the eighties after the open-door policies and categorized as “rich” was an icon of the “anti-revolution” party. Abbaseya square was for the support of the army (Abbaseya is an old district from the late 19th century that has transformed from an elite district to a popular crowded and congested district since the mid twentieth century. Roxy square in Heliopolis residents are the elite of the second half of the twentieth century, now recognized as the icon of the “couch-potato” party, or the group of Egyptians that silently and remotely watch what is going on. And the auto-strade street, particularly at the unknown soldier memorial area is recognized by those supporting the late General Omar Soliman and Lieutenant General Ahmed Shafik (the last two men of the former regime that played roles part in after the revolution drama). Then, later in December 2012 Heliopolis has witnessed a union between the tahrir revolutionists and the Heliopolis revolutionist in front of the El-Eth’adeya palace accentuating on the collaboration between more parties against the ruling of the moslem brotherhood president Morsy residing in the palace. Then it became a battle field, and the Tahrir cycle of events started all over again, this time in Heliopolis.

The fact is that political analysis goes beyond the scope of this paper, however, the 2011 revolution and beyond have shed light on the following four political/socio-behavioral/urban observations:

Rejuvenation of the so long denied CBD of Cairo, and transforming it to the „center of the nation“. During the 18-days revolution. This suggests the need of people for a common public urban space that would act as the social heart of the city where people can gather in large groups, uncategorized or classified by social/economic/cultural or religious measures-determinants so they can express themselves and renew their sense of belonging to the country. No matter how a city might swell in size or expand haphazardly out of its peripherals, have as new CBD’s as its districts expand, yet, the classic heart would always be the reference point where people will return to, despite of socio-economic or cultural differences.

The second observation pertains to the fragmentation of the old heart to more recent hearts- as in the cases of Heliopolis, Muhandesin, Nasr City etc. has proved to be an urban phenomenon. This phenomenon is witnessed in the categorization of the demonstrations all around Cairo for their own reasons, expressing different political views and beliefs.

The marginalized, so long denied urban poor, who have been long suppressed and underexpressed, deprived of any appropriate human built environment and were underspoken, strive to express themselves and announce their presence and their volume within the Cairene society (more than 65 % of Cairo residents are urban poor according to several sources). Their message is that they are here to stay. Carrying some behaviors from their districts of origin- probably the informal areas and stress to the heart of the city right after the revolution and then to the fragmented hearts where the demonstrations have moved to.

The fourth observation is the newly emerged street visual and performing arts; street journalism, graffiti, street troops, experimental plays, and others. Raising some doubts about where were those youth before the revolution? Didn’t they have youth centers, clubs to perform and demonstrate such skills and talent shows? Was there urban suppression for some sectors of the society accompanying the political oppression that has found its way just like a jack –in-a-box after the revolution? Is there a relationship between a political dictatorship and urban dictatorship? Evoking an inquiry about the existence of adequate social places in the city to incubate such cultural and entertainment cultural activities.

Day after day and month after the other more observations are detected. An unaccepted street behaviour has become dominant between both the youth and the adults as well. It has spanned to reign over personal, professional, and public interactions between many of the Egyptian youth and has accordingly changed the conception of use of open spaces and public areas in Cairo and other several major Egyptian cities.

## 7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

May be this previous section has relied more on personal observations and interpretations than on action-research investigation, However. They provoke several questions:

- Does politics influence socio-urban change?

Yes, and the review of the Cairene heart reveals the fact that politics dictates how a certain group/community live and therefore shape their districts, physically and conceptually.

- Can the design of the urban public spaces change with the change of the socio-cultural composition of residents in a district /area?

Yes, as every group of residents require some physical-tangible features for their conceptual-non-tangible vision, beliefs, requirements and aspirations, as seen in the transformations of the hearts reviewed along the paper.

- Did what happen of a change in attitude and behavior in the Egyptian conserved society has anything to do with a change of meaning and conceptualization of public spaces, squares and streets from merely physical paths and nodes to areas of human and social groups interaction?

Yes, what we saw of the newly emerged activities in the heart of the city and its major square “Tahrir” affirms the fact that we are in real need for the application of urban sociology and socio-behavioral studies in the planning, design and development of cities and districts

- Does what this paper tackle really calls for a redefinition of the heart of the city, detached from the definition of the CBD and totally detached from the city planning theories?

Yes, we are in urgent need of a socio cultural definition the proposes a new urban role of the vibrant areas inside the city and in need of methodic approaches for its urban design.

To conclude, and along the paper, theoretical foundation of the city heart, center and CBD was reviewed. Then, emphasis was given to the heart of Cairo; since its foundation, to its development, to its several migrations, proving that there is a difference between the CBD and the heart. After its migration to newer modern and contemporary districts, Down Town Cairo is NOT the CBD any more. Jan 2011 revolution is a milestone in the transformation of the heart of Cairo, transforming it to the heart of the nation after its decline and migration to remote hearts for more than a quarter of a century. The revolution has rejuvenated it as a heart repository of the community’s collective memory (as described by J.M. Richards), an expression of the collective mind and spirit by the community (as described by Jaqueline Tywhitt). This phenomenon has rung a bell for “democratic urban areas” in the city that satisfy the sociocultural needs of the city dwellers, and not only the physical standardized measures. More, and as Le Curbosier has identified the heart of the city as “the meeting place for the hearts”, it is evident that the young artists found no better place to revolt for their buried talents except by the “art demonstrations” in Tahrir. It is also worth mentioning that renowned artist, singers, poets and others, also perform in the square, accentuating on the notion that Tahrir and the Kedivial heart have been rejuvenated as an “art heart”. I also believe what happens around me of a change in society and its shifting from a conserved, ethically driven society to a daring-bold attitude since the revolution and until now is a major socio-behavioral change that has to be dealt with from an urban perspective, if we believe that urbanism is a formula equivalent to [user\*place\*time]. I’m also convinced that we are in an urgent need that the city planning and city design sciences should include cultural and social aspects and measures, and not only engineering ones.

And finally, I leave the ending of the paper open for discussion and debate...

## 8 REFERENCES

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