

I Am My City: Rethinking Cairo As A Contented City

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1 ABSTRACT

Cairo: the urban legend, is one of the most ancient, colourful, multifaceted of cities. Seat of pharaohs, sultans and kings, prize of conquerors from Alexander to Saladin to Napoleon, "the city Victorious" has never stopped reinventing herself. The very nature of Cairo has ever reflected polycentric ensembles of urbanism that belonged to different user group, with different perspectives, conceptions and aspirations towards their city life. Sorrowfully over the past few decades, the city has lost most of its acquired identities for reasons beyond the scope of this paper. It is argued that the city has undergone, and still undergoing- a process of expansion and extension for its physical measures on the expenses of its societal, heritage and cultural identity to the extent that is considered as "a city out of control". Where is Cairo going? Who defines its directions? Whose visions does it follow? Is planning still possible for contemporary Cairo? Can the quality of life be improved by improving the city's resilience?

With Egyptian history instantly being rewritten, I am dreaming of a Cairo reborn. Hence, imaging the future of Cairo for any planning, design or governance intention requires understanding and inferring the functional aspects of the socio-cultural patterns in the city. Hence determining the what, why and how of planning and design. This further requires reviewing theoretical conceptualisations and evaluating examples of other cities and regions that are agreed upon as vibrant, resilient, liveable, smart and most importantly: happy.

The paper at hand serves as a theoretical approach towards understanding contemporary Cairo identity as a prologue for its urban reform as a vibrant city. My objective is to introduce a model for understanding Cairo through correlating urbanism to its political, economic, legislative, and socio-cultural attributes. Therefor hypothesise visions for its transformation into a vibrant city. The methodology is based on a quick review of the modern urban history of Cairo; identifying its districts types, their local characteristics of user groups, behavioural patterns and physical settings, and then discussing Cairo's overall contemporary political, economic, legislative, and socio-cultural attributes that altogether designate its overall cultural identity. Based on the works of Stewart-Hakky-Hemdan, Abu-Loghod, Giraud, Raymond, Sims, Singerman, Amar et al, further talk about Cairo argues its actuality as a collective/integrated capital, or interrelated/intertwined entities of substantial districts. Thus identifying its urbanism lacks and shortcomings. Based on the works of Jacobs, Alexander, Lynch, Gosling, Maitland, Wiedenhoef, Geddes, Low, Patsy, Montgomery and others, theoretical debates then discern contextual definitions and conflicts of "vibrant", "resilient", "smart", "liveable", "sustainable" and "happy" city concepts. Through an exploratory grounded observation in the various, multi-faceted districts of the city, in addition to a random exploratory investigation with a number of residents, an attempt was to give Cairo an urban description was undergone. Questions are thenceforth evoked about the values, visions and practices explores the possibilities and suitability of approaches that profile a theory towards the transformation of our Cairo Victorious into a liveable, sustainable, smart, and a happy city. Such discussion is also expected to provide insights for planners, designers, decision makers for the betterment of both practice and education fields.

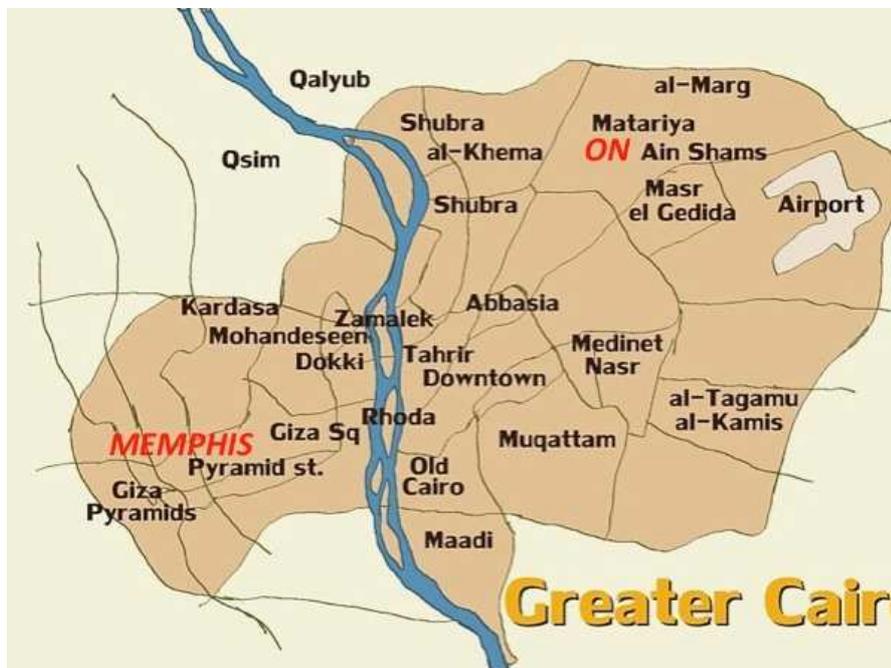
2 CAIRO YESTERDAY: A CITY RESILIENT

The legend says that the eighth descendant of king Osymandias founded Memphis, the most illustrious city in Egypt. For he sought out the most fitting site in the land, the place where the Nile divides the Delta, situated, as it were, at the gateway to Egypt, was master of all the commerce passing upstream to the country above. On "Heliopolis" was later founded, and eventually both were connected. The route from Memphis to On "Heliopolis", slashing upwards from south-west to north-east, remains the major traffic axis of twenty first century Cairo. The date groves enfold the few stubs and chunks of Memphis that have not subsided into the quick silt of the valley floor.

Even these scant remains threaten to vanish now, not into the ground but under the brick and reinforced concrete of expanding Cairo.

A thousand years ago the Persian geographer Huduh al-Alam described Misr El-Fustat as "the wealthiest city in the world". An Arab contemporary, the Jerusalemite al-Muqaddasi, wrote that "its citizens thronged as

thick as locusts”. As centuries passed, however, the rich and powerful sought more spacious, quarters further north in the open plain stretching towards the ruins of the ancient On. By the time Columbus sailed for Indies –hoping, like his Portuguese competitors, to find a new route to the east and this break the spice monopoly of the sultans who reigned from our very citadel- Misr Al Fustat was nothing but a rubbish tip fort he great and prosperous city of Cairo.



Figure#1 Memphis and On on contemporary Cairo’s map

Fabled medieval Cairo of bazaars, domes, and minarets; the spiral ninth century Mosque of Ahmad Ibn Tulun, the elegant tiers of Sultan Hassan’s fourteenth century madrassa, the sharp, pencil pointed towers of the Ottoman period, the twin bulbs a-top of Bab Zuwayla –the eleventh-century gate where long ago the heads of criminals were hung and a troll was said to lurk behind the massive door. Splendid mosques still survive by the dozen, evoking the long summer from the tenth to sixteenth centuries when Cairo was the biggest and richest city west of India. When Ibn Battuta first arrived in the year AD 1326, Cairo was indeed at the peak of its fortunes. For three centuries it had been the greatest of Muslim cities. But this town was already ancient long before the coming of Islam. Successive cities have grown, flourished, decayed and been reborn on this site beginning no less than 4,000 years before. The town was so old that its inhabitants even at the start of the barely conceivable antiquity believed that this was where Creation itself had taken place.

Tall buildings are no novelty to Cairo. Its loftiest medieval minarets are 250 feet high, and even the apartment houses of a thousand years ago were commonly seven or, by one account up to fourteen storeys tall. “We arrived in Cairo on Sunday, June 18, 1481. I had come to see the Cairenes and their deeds. However, if I were to write about its wealth and its people, all of this book would not be sufficient. I swear that I fit were possible to put Rome, Venice, Milan, Padua. Florence and four more cities together, they would not equal in wealth and population half that of Cairo”.

The classic panorama of Cairo remains the one that enchanted Orientalists painters two centuries ago. On snogless days, the vista from the esplanade at the citadel, Cairo’s mammoth crusader-era fortress, is stunning. It is from here that centuries of rulers surveyed the city at their feet (and occasionally, in times of trouble, from where they fired cannon shots to subdue its unruly people). The first thing that astonishes a stranger to Cairo is the squalid wretchedness of the Arabs and the external splendour of the Turks. “With the polo, the

balls, the racing and the riding, Cairo begins to impress itself upon you as an English town in which any quantity of Oriental sights are kept for the aesthetic satisfaction of the inhabitants, much as the proprietor of a country keeps a game preserve or deer park for his amusement”.

The city’s dominance echoes in the language itself. Misr- the word derived from the same roots as the biblical Mizraim, or Egyptians –is still the common Arabic name fort he city, and just as Memphis was once

confused with Egypt as a whole, to this day the name for Egypt in Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish, Persian, Urdu, or Hindi is also Misr. To 250 million Arabic speakers and 1 billion Muslims, Cairo retains a mystique, a stature, and a reassuring gravity that no other city can match.

German, Austro-Hungarian, French and Italian architects had given much of this new city a belle époque veneer, with a twist here and there of Islamic decor to maintain the oriental atmosphere. A sort of French municipal dream progressed steadily from Opera square to nearby Ataba square- the hub of Cairo's rapidly expanding tramway network. A statue of Ibrahim guarded the Azbakiyya Gardens, with their winding paths and fountains, their banyan trees and bandstand, and the Italianate quarters of the Khedivial fencing club. Behind Ibrahim and to his left stood the domed main post office and the fire department, with its shiny red engines pulled by thirteen specially imported English carthorses. Nearby, Oscar Horowitz had capped a five story department of Victor Tiring et frères with a glass globe illuminated from inside and held aloft by four cast iron strong men. Here East meets the West, and the struggle between the two elements still rages at its greatest height. To the west lives Europe, to the East the orient. Gradually the former is encroaching upon the latter, so much so that in the Mousky, a Levantine thoroughfare interlaces by Arab lanes, the huge signboard of a well-known whisky firm tops a wakf or a religious establishment.

Tongues and races mingled amid the tight ranks of tenements in Cairo's new working-class districts. They mixed happily on the whole, even if the influence was mostly one way, and even if marriage across religions remained rare. All adopting Mediterranean dress, manners, and phrasing. Fifteen miles south of Cairo, facing the ruins of Memphis across the Nile, an ancient sulphur spring had been developed into a chic spa. Aside from healing baths and luxury accommodation, Helwan-les-bains was equipped with a Japanese garden fitted with Pagodas and plaster Buddha's. The fresh air of the nearby desert made it an ideal place for pony rides and picnics. Alpine chalets abutted pillared and porticoed neo-classical mansions. Bougainvillea hedges separated Raj-style bungalows from steep-roofed manor houses. Garden competitions, Boy Scout and Brownie troops, a sporting club with a golf course and a yacht club on the Nile, churches, mosques and a thriving synagogue completed this suburban dream „Maadi“.

As the time passed, apartment blocks and office buildings has supplanted the original villas of Khedive Ismail's modern city. The city centre had shifted westward away from Ataba square and towards the Nile. What was then downtown Cairo had become a dense zone of shops and offices that looked a little different from Milan or Barcelona. Glorious avenues of trees were cut down, great gardens swallowed up by enormous European buildings, and the beauty is gone!

A visitor from New York claimed he had seen no town outside America where so many large and rich looking houses were being built: "they are not just beautiful, but they are undoubtedly very costly. The roads are broad; luxurious motorcars abound; and there is a dazzle of expensive finery, which is not the less alluring because the face of the wearer is half-veiled". By that time, Cairo no longer aspired to be cosmopolitan; it already was. By that time, our Copts and Jews together with Greeks, Italians, British, French and white Russians who dominated business and finance. "to be French speaking in Cairo before 1952 revolution was to belong to a group of people who felt themselves deeply rooted in Cairo as a place, and probably believed that their lives would be spent in that city until death disseminated them to their various cemeteries, distinguished only by religion or rite. It was to think of Cairo as home, but to believe that Paris was the navel of the world".

The following table summarises Cairo's cultural importations over time:

Era	Cairo's History	Cultural Importations
Prehistoric	Ancient Egypt (Memphis, On Heliopolis)	Influences From Africa+ Ethiopia + East Early interference from hybrid identities
Classical	Ptolemaic Period 332-30 BC Roman & Byzantine (Alexandria was capital, but Misr was important port)	Early globalized amalgamate identity

Medieval	Arab 641-969: Amr Ibn El-Ass Conquest 640 (Al fustat) Abassid Caliphate El-Ekhshidy (Al Askar) 750-868 - Ibn Tulun 837: AL Katai' (new royal city)	Amr Ibn AlAss came from the Arab peninsula, while the two following dynasty rulers came from the Kurds (Iraq now) with a Mesopotamian/Persian background
	Fatimid 969-1171 Al Qahera (Cairo) - to date	Resided in Sharqeya, and largely in upper Egypt. Fatimids originated in Tunisia, North Africa; with "Berber" back ground. They descended from Fatima el Zahraa, daughter of prophet Mohamed, Ismaili branch of Shi'ism
	Ayubid 1171-1250	Salah Eldin ElAyuubi came from Kurds (Iraq)
	Mamluk 1250-1517	Owned slaves from Circassia, Georgia, some came from Persia, India and Iraq, current Russian peripherals and Far East
Early Modern	Ottoman 1517-1867	Constantinople from Byzantine origins/backgrounds
	French Occupation 1798-1801	France, central Europe
	Mohamed Aly (1805-1882)	Balkan, Albanian, south Slavic, with Byzantine origins/backgrounds
	Khedivate (1867-1914)	-Westernization connections with France, Italy and Great Britain -Connection with Istanbul (Top Kapi) with byzantine origins
Modern	British Occupation 1882-1953	
	Sultanate 1914-1922	
	Kingdome 1922-1953	Connection with Great Britain

Table #1 Cairo's cultural importations over time

It can be therefore concluded that -evidently, Cairo has always been able to absorb any imported or hybrid features, and reflect it in a unique urban reality.

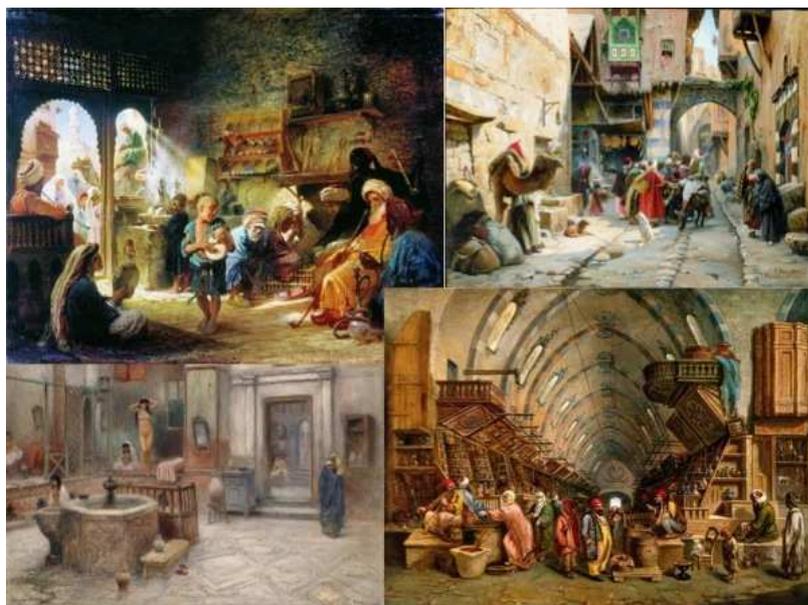


Figure #2 Scenes of yesterday's Cairo 1



Figure #3 Scenes of yesterday's Cairo 2

3 CAIRO TODAY: A CITY OUT OF CONTROL

Cairo, knowing the city too well, in the words of Naguib Mahfouz: “like meeting your beloved in old age, then was I to tell about her wrinkles, her bad breath and worse taste, and her unfortunate habit of shouting at servants?” “The city is changing, and what it was changing through disturbed me. I felt increasingly estranged from what was becoming a harder, more impatient, less tolerant city of ugly new buildings – a place far removed from other Cairo’s I had known. Crowding squeezes Cairenes out of their homes. There are precious few garden spaces, until a recent study of the city stated there were only five square inches of parkland per inhabitants, which is to say less than the area covered by the sole of one . The pressure of people touches every aspect of life in Cairo. It drives the price of land as high as \$500 a spare foot, making millionaires out of speculators while stifling youthful dreams of independence. It overburdens public services and so litters thoroughfares with uncollected waste, but it also limits crime by cluttering getaway routes. Crowds draw in business, creating a rich and varied market that generating more money to embellish the city with the facilities and monuments, which sustain its sense of greatness. But this forces compromises: to relieve traffic, concrete flyovers brush past medieval walls; to provide housing, apartment buildings supplant gardens. Rather than standing live flamingos, Cairenes take themselves out to the streets. They turn sidewalks and roadways into zones of commerce and entertainment, converting them piecemeal into playgrounds and restaurants and open-air mosques. The street is where some two million homeless (or more) sleep, and where all the people of Cairo engage in combat with the city’s millions motor vehicles and thousands of donkey carts, minibuses and toktoks. The crowding makes for noise and stress, pollution and social tension. We Cairenes complain, yet secretly, complicitously, we are by and large addicted to living cheek by jowl with a never-ending spectacle.

Combined with the dust that blows off the desert, heavy use gives the city a cosy patina of age. It burnished knobs and handrails to greasy smoothness, cracked tiles into shards, and tint walls into a uniform dun colour that ignites into gold in the soft, slanting light of late afternoon. Sidewalks buckle under the weight of feet.

Staircases in grand beaux-arts building sag, their marble steps eroded into slippery hollows. Advertising tattoos every surface with Arabic’s elegant squiggle. Neon spangles rooftops, mingling with antennae and the upturned domes of satellite dishes. The air itself is saturated with the things of man. Deep-frying oil and fresh mint overlies the musk of freshly slaked dust. The human urge to be noticed floods the completely sound spectrum noise, from “Allah Akbar” blasting off every mosque megaphone to insults hurled from the other end of the Arabic alphabet. The noonday in Cairo is a rock-concert-equivalent to over one hundred decibels.

However though, when Arabs think of Cairo, they still think of it as a repository of Arabness: the seat of the greatest universities, the largest libraries, the biggest-circulation newspapers, the most vibrant pop culture – and even of the busiest camel market in the Arab world. The more than million Arab tourists who come

every year rarely bother with Cairo's antiquities. They head instead to theatres, to cinemas and literary watering holes, to swank gambling casinos and glitzy nightclubs. They go to cafes to soak up the sounds of Cairene slang and eavesdrop on the latest jokes. They flock to concert halls for the toniest in classical oriental music and swarm street kiosks blaring the sassiest Arabic rap. They come because, worn as she is, Cairo still draws the best talent in Arab arts.



Figure #4 Scenes of today's Cairo

Hence, it can be concluded that the modern history of Cairo's urban milestone comprises:

- The phase of La Belle Epoch (1850-1950) that included the birth of modern Cairo, and several political and cultural upheavals, including WWI, 1919 Revolution, WWII and after.
- The 1952 Revolution and beyond phase, with the 1950's and 1960's Centralisation and Nationalisation, 1967 War, 1973 War, and the Open-door policy 1974. This phase was the remarkable beginning of the urban decline.
- With the 1980's and 1990's Privatisation, then the reign of Globalisation and the turn of the millennium, Cairo's urban and architectural enigma (2000+) has started, reaching its peak after the Jan 2011 revolution, where the city went was totally out of control, and still is till the writing of these lines. Cairene urban status can now be described as spontaneous, "improvised", or "ad-hoc". As a result, an unexpected deficiency occurred in the entire number and classification for all inhabitants' social classes. This deficiency is paralleled with a large speedy construction movement all over Cairo like nowhere else in the world.

It is evident-also, that the continuous social flux in contemporary Cairo has made it a fascinating example of urban change. Witnessing the struggle between politics, history, and place making since the fifties of the twentieth century has caused erasing and demolishing parts of its past. The intense city has become a self-destructive character, culminating the question of a Cairene identity. Efforts dedicated/exerted to respond to Cairo's chaotic urban identity are numerous and various in approaches; national or individual or limited-scale sized projects are implemented. Some of them are dedicated to conservation and preservation of historical areas, and some are dedicated to partial development or beautification of city districts. However, something is still missing or troublesome. For what we find day after day is more law breaking, vandalism, demolishing of historic buildings or buildings of value and an overall deterioration of the city. In addition to the reign of informality and its merging/blending with all formal city districts, Cairo today possesses a confused urban identity.

A quick review of Cairo's profile –or the Egyptian capital history- reveals the fact of the multiple-layered embedded identities. The socio-urban topography of contemporary Cairo can be summarised in the following description of each district-category, based on location, dominant activities, type of residents, and status:

- The Historical Districts: User groups: the troops of the "balady" locals and workers in the nearby downtown. Naturally deteriorated due to age, lack of maintenance and urban governance. Most of the historic buildings currently suffer from collapse-threats that might lead to their total loss.
- The Nineteenth Century Districts: User groups: low-middle class. Mostly governmental employers and some tradesmen.
- Turn of the Century Districts: Each was dedicated to a user group, ethnicity, or nationality. Either in villas with gardens, or apartment buildings, all districts were elegantly designed with different European. With the social mobility that accompanied the nationalisation and centralisation, the user groups, the land uses, and the urban fabrics have changed dramatically. Many of the old buildings are destroyed to accommodate high-rise ones. Densities have exploded. Most of these districts have repelled their original residences and their current social structure cannot be categorised.
- Twentieth Century (Modern) Districts: Built on the new town-planning schemes, models of modernism are dominant in gridiron urban fabrics and high-rise buildings, and newly building types. Home for the newly centralised governmental institutions, with modern architecture. Included modern activities required by the emerging user groups, clubs, shopping centres, parks, schools, day-care centres, etc.
- New Urban Settlements and Gated Compounds: Divided into two categories; satellite cities and attached cities, and gated compounds. After 1973's victory, a decision to decentralize the economy and industry was intended to protect the city from the overpopulation as well as to protect the left agricultural plots of the city from the crawling of urbanism. Linked with ring roads and/or highways. Built on planned infra structure and services, to house low-income residents of the big city, as well as newly-weds. Mostly designed as workers cities for the low-middle and low income. A second type of urban settlements (gated compounds) was started in the nineties, after the original districts of the city became repellent. Including all types of luxurious aspirations of entertainments. Buildings are with very low density and highest percentages of areas are left for greenery and public spaces. Types of users of this type are mainly the businessmen and the newly crème of society.
- Squatter Settlements: Capitalised over the past three decades, scattered within and outside the city peripherals, covering more that 50% of Cairo's face, are considered as the instant solution for the homeless. They house very high densities, reaching 90% building densities, up to five floors. Mostly deprived of infra structures and services, as well as public spaces. The user groups of those settlements are the socially marginalised and the least-income inhabitants of the big city.

The fact is that Cairo has never been entirely expressive of one culture. Perhaps some dominant culture –now or then has reigned, and then was subject to change with the alterations of its influences/dictates. From its naissance, Cairo was built where there were already subcultures presenting the subgroups of the Egyptian capital (Madinet Masr). While the historical part of the capital amalgamation of history, nationalities, and therefore, cultures, fall beyond the scope of this paper, yet, it is worth reminding, Cairo's particular single urban identity is indeed a true fallacy.

Era	Cairo's History	Cultural Importations
Late Modern	Republic: - 1953-1970 - 1970-1981 - 1981-turn of the millennium	Connection with former USSR Connection with the USA Globalisation and Communication Rebellion
Contemporary	2000-2011 2011- 2015 2015-	Urban Collapse & Launch of New "Globalised" Capital Project

Table#2 late modern and contemporary Cairo's cultural importations

However, with the highly politicised cityscape of modern and contemporary Cairo, it has reached a perplexed state that made her face major political, economic, social and cultural challenges. This has resulted in a lack of identity at all; bearing in mind that the city's loss of urban identity is a reflection of the entire Egyptian cultural hesitation and search for meaning.

Walking down Cairo streets today puts me in such a complexed state. People seem to be unhappy. They look stressed, hopeless and reckless. What I read in the books and see in the old movies seem to me like a fairy tale. According to the United Nations, Cairo is the most densely populated large urban area in the world. Overall, this city packs 70,000 people into each of its 200 square miles, confining its citizens more tightly than does the bristling little island of Manhattan. In central districts the density is 300, 000 per square mole, a figure that soars in some throng not tower blocks but alleys full of low-rise tenements, that differ little from the housing stock of, say a thousand years ago. In such conditions, with three and sometimes five people in a tiny room, families take turns to eat and sleep. Schools operate in up to three shifts, and still have to squeeze fifty, sixty, or sometimes eighty students in a class.

Something must be done for our mother city. Both the mother and all her children are aching under the political unrest, worsening economy, deteriorated health conditions. Tons of garbage are piled around many corners of her streets, pavements are not more for pedestrians. Even the streets, many of which have no room for cars! Public spaces are not for the public. Fast food restaurants and enclosed malls top the destinations for family outings, instead of public areas and piazzas. Kids can not walk on their own, can not bike, mothers fear their babies get sick, special-needs residents can not stroll on their own, senior citizens almost have no where to go in many districts and streets. The urban environment has gone ugly enduring all aspects of pollution. In my viewpoint, such built environment has also affected the values and manners of many Cairenes, in addition to the very fact of the rivalry and turmoil of sub-cultures. This has become a threat to many conservative families. This urban buzz is a product of 22-or-so million inhabitants simultaneously crushing the city's infrastructure under their collective weight, yet lifting its spirit up with their exceptional charm and humour.

Based on the preceding, Cairo and the Cairenes possess two striking facts; being of numerous origins; an amalgam of cultural backgrounds, and being of different urban settings; various subcultures. A plan for Cairo is therefor not only confined to planning, urban and housing design. Rather, it is political, economic, educational, and primarily cultural. If we are targeting a better Egypt, it is my belief that a decent quality of life should be the core and pivot of our entire strategic and action plans. It is my belief that the Cairo urban conundrum would only be solved through urban sociology.

4 CAIRO'S URBAN IDENTITY: A CITY CONTENTED?

As revised in the previous sections of the paper, Cairo today is a huge-over populated city of multiple urban settlements, described as the largest urban mass in the contemporary world. Physically, some parts are really attractive, others are really secure, others are really vibrant, others are really liveable. But, can Cairo be collectively described to have a particular urban identity?

The fact is that the failure of "well-physically-measured"planned cities has resulted in tackling urbanism from different perspectives.

Urban planning and design theories over the last three decades have emphasised the social and behavioural measures in the design of the built environment as means for urban success. Many concepts and terms were then introduced in which responses of city dwellers to their quality of life are the major determinants of urban accomplishment. Based on the works of Jacobs, Alexander, Lynch, Appleyard, Gosling, Maitland, Wiedenhoft, Geddes, Low, Patsy, Montgomery, Gehl, and others, theoretical debates then discern contextual definitions of "vibrant", "resilient", "smart", "liveable", "sustainable"and "happy"city concepts. In this part of the paper, and with the help of such theories, an exploratory grounded approach is employed together a random investigation with residents of the different Cairo district types. The aim was to identify the conflicting nature of Cairo in the eyes of its people: „us“; inferring Cairo's urban status from a socio-behavioural perspective so that we are able to identify its urbanism lacks and shortcomings, thus determining possibilities and suitability of approaches to profile a theory towards the transformation of Cairo, and hence determining values, visions and strategies for its future development.

Definitions and descriptions of vibrant, liveable, sustainable, resilient and happy cities were devised as a checklist, as basis for an exploratory grounded observation in the different districts of the cities. This helped formulate an argumentative approach. Based on the works of Canter, Zeisel, Groat and others, the observation techniques depended on ground-base-maps, checklists and photography. The following table gives a glimpse of the undertaken process:

Concept	Features/Qualities	Yes	No	Conditioned
Vibrant	throbbing with energy or activity, vigorous, lively, vital	Yes		
	active, people talking, lots of facilities, tourist destinations, lots of things to do/show/see	Yes		
	continuous economic development (resulting in prosperity), technological innovation, economic entrepreneurship, offering its inhabitants a multiple experiences			Conditioned
Liveable	attractive & secure environments for people to live/work/play in			Conditioned
	good governance, competitive economy, high quality of living, environmental sustainability		No	
	place is easy to use and feels safe, creating and maintaining a sense of enjoyable place			Conditioned
	combination of amenity values, open spaces, special design features, historic and cultural heritage, location, intangibles	Yes		
	Character landscape sense of place	Yes		
Sustainable	enables citizens to meet their own needs and enhance their wellbeing without degrading natural world or lives of other people or species - now or in the future		No	
	patterns of production consumption-transportation systems		No	
	pollution prevention, respect for the carrying capacity of the eco-system		No	
	preservation of opportunities for future generation, enhancing the quality of life			Conditioned
	managing urban growth		No	
	policies, mixed-use city			Conditioned
	efficient public transportation systems and measures		No	
	encouraging walking and cycling			Conditioned
Resilient	a city that has developed capacities to help absorb future shocks and stresses to its social, economic and technical systems and infra structure	Yes		
	ability to maintain essentially the same functions, structures and individual identity			Conditioned
Smart	digitally networked and technology-advanced spearheaded by software and hardware companies		No	
	organic integration of social and environmental systems		No	
Happy	offers walking exposure to different city areas			Conditioned

Happy	experimentation of form and long day time span	<i>Yes</i>		
	Greenery, redbrick houses, public gardens, pedestrian plazas, bike lanes, spaces for public art installations and recreation			<i>Conditioned</i>

Table #3: observation checklist

Based on the observation, and according to the theoretical stances, Cairo is a vibrant city, providing its inhabitants a multitude of experience. Indeed, Cairo is impulsing or throbbing with energy or activity. It is vigorous, lively, and vital. It is characterised by rapid, rhythmic movement back and forth or to and from; vibrating. Cairo is a very active city; where people talking all day long, and where there are lots of activities and tourist destinations. Heavily populated cities are vibrant cities, and Cairo is one marked by much life, movement, and activity. It indeed has lots of things to do, to show, see, and where there's a lot of activity. From retrospection, a vibrant city is also described as the city having continuous economic development; resulting in prosperity. Cairo for Egypt is the engine of economic growth, it consumes almost or above 70% of Egypt's energy, mainly contribute to urbanisation rates, energy consumption and climate change.

Literature on vibrant cities also affirms that a vibrant city provides a good physical environment, together with an image and local identity, and that it is an orderly city. It also provides technological innovation and economic entrepreneurship as well as artistic and cultural activities. For Cairo, those last few aspects are debatable.

From retrospection, observations detecting the liveability witnessed that Cairo comprises a unique combination of amenity values open space and special design features, historic and cultural heritage, location, intangibles such as character, landscape and sense of place. Hence, in that sense, Cairo is a liveable city. However, some other measures are debatable or, let's say-conditioned in Cairo, such as the good planning, the provision of vibrant attractive and secure environment for people to live, work and play. Encompassing good governance, a competitive economy, high quality of living and environmental sustainability are also conditional in Cairo. Therefore, and concerning such measures, Cairo is a conditioned liveable city. More criteria components measures place excludes Cairo of the liveable city list.

Such as: protection of the environment, maintenance of a diverse economy, provision of accessibility through land use, housing choices, balanced city budgets, the involvement of people in planning, public safety, a clean city with healthy environment, integrated public transport system, self-sufficient communities, barrier free, accessible for all, social wellbeing of its citizens, activity with greater transparency and good governance by all. In that sense, Cairo is not a liveable city.

Like wise, regarding Cairo as a happy city is conditioned. It fulfils some criteria and misses some. offerswalking exposure to different city areas, experimentation with form and long daytime span. Despite the fact that the percentage of greenery is rocketing in Cairo peripheral compounds, yet, it can never be described as green. However, some green locations do create sub-meanings of beautiful and quite, and consequently, urban happiness. Literature on happy cities includesredbrick houses, public gardens, pedestrian piazzas, bike-lanes, spaces for public art installations and recreation as other causes of urban happiness. While tall buildings and car areas were associated with sadness according to some investigations. Based on that logic, Cairo offers piecemeal happiness for its residences. According to the recent urban literature, city dwellers'happiness is the most countable dimension to measure urban achievement.

Indeed Cairo's history is an ever changing state of continuous flux, victoriously struggling to adapt itself against all its imposed circumstances and never failing to surprise us; reinventing itself despite its own flaws.

Investigating People Standpoints About Their Districts And Their City:

Moving to this part of the paper, and to support the argument, an investigation was conducted, through semi-structured questionnaires and interviews with a number of residents from the different district types. The design of the investigation depended/relied primarily on the examples provided by Canter, Zeisel, Groat, and others. Locations for meeting people were randomly chosen in public spaces; piazzas, parks, streets and cafes of the different Cairene district-types hypothesised earlier in the paper. The sample comprised different gender and age groups. The questions were designed/based on examining people's perceptions

regarding the definitions and features of the vibrant, liveable, sustainable, smart and happy cities explored earlier in the paper. They also revolved around three pivots; physical measures (including distances, densities, population, scale, activity locations, accessibility, diversity and proximity, trips and routes to and from activities, walkability bike ability, public transportation systems), socio-cultural measures (including meanings, opinions, values, social interactions, privacy, security and safety, social isolation, inclusion versus segregation, sense of community and sense of belonging), built environment significance (including sense of place, place identity, design features and formal qualities, style, and imageability, landmarks, attractiveness and appeal). Further questions on ranking favourite spaces and places in both their near environment and in the entire city, inquiries if some buildings did more than their functional structure, neighbourhood satisfaction and homogeneity were also proposed, with responses that gave deeper insights. In addition to further open ended questions and elaborations/suggestions of respondents to develop their city to their most convenience. An ending "yes/no" question was directly measuring their satisfaction with their city's overall urbanism.

Negative responses were basically on the high population, congestion, pollution, lack of cleanliness, loss of amenity spaces, reduction of privacy, social segregation between societal classes, high cost of accommodation in the city centre and in the more privileged suburbs. More negative responses referred to the high dependency on the car, insufficiency of the public transportation systems, lack of many public spaces and greenery, disappearance of many public free activities for different genders and age groups.

Most of what were expected responses. However, and with all demographic variables of the respondents, statistics revealed that- and with all the expected negative responses, yet and very consistently 30% of the sample investigated was very satisfied with Cairo as it is! 48% was satisfied with conservations, 13% was dissatisfied and only 9% was very dissatisfied.

This has led me to wonder a little more if- in Cairo's case- there was a synonym for urban satisfaction? Contentment seemed the appropriate term to describe how the Cairenes perceived their city. Contented denote the feeling or expressing acceptance of status or situation, it signified gratification and satisfaction. It seemed to me that we "Cairenes" were destined to pursuit contentment in our city. The only aspect that has influenced our collective wellbeing and made us endure the everlasting changes enforced on us and mirrored on our city. Where is Cairo going? Is planning still possible for contemporary Cairo? Can Cairo ever be located on the liveable or sustainable or smart or happy cities map?

5 CAIRO TOMORROW: VALUES, VISIONS AND STRATEGIES

Locating Cairo on the liveable or sustainable or smart or happy cities map is mainly concerned with the enhancement of quality of life of the residents rather than its urban form, size or area. According to Jan Gehl: "life of people come first, then comes spaces, then comes buildings, the other way around never works". This means that some values and ethics should be implanted for any planning or design of our city contented.

Values and ethics that revolve around the human, such that human life of the Cairenes can continue indefinitely, humans of Cairo can flourish, Cairene multiple/various cultures can develop. This calls for a vision based on the following considerations:

- A strict connection with the social dimension should be enforced, namely to the relationships among the different groups and cultures.
- These relationships are based on the idea that the welfare of the individual in the community is linked to the welfare of the system itself.
- Multiplicity and differentiation should not build invisible walls in human life. Meanwhile conflicts, individuality, isolation, and plurality should be replaced by concepts of cooperation, and participation.

The vision for the future Cairo contented would then be pivoted around the enhancement of the quality of life of its humans; bringing together different people in self-sufficient settings, with variety of activities and amenities that guarantees safety, proximity, accessibility and interest for all. This vision requires some performance measures/indicators, these are: stability indicators, health-care indicators, cultural and environmental indicators, educational indicators, and infra-structural indicators. The solution to Cairo's urban challenges therefore needs a humanistic urbanisation manifesto that advises some strategies for

achieving its urban calmness. On top of such strategies is to break down bigness. A focus on the present is to prioritise particular areas, spots or locals, rather than targeting wider geographical areas, scale of homogeneous areas –small enough to allow people to be aware of others. Telling the truth about politics and economy, and their consequences on the cultural attributes and social implications should be discussed with city dwellers Learning to listen to people would thus prioritise feelings over forms (form follows feeling) and would guarantee social inclusion, neighbourhood scale-suitability and a strengthened sense of community; and hence a strategy of people empowerment would be endowed. Fighting for environmental justice is yet another determinant component of this manifesto. Endorsement of public transportation and freeing pedestrians, together with sufficient connected public spaces are strategies that will have positive outcomes for social cohesion, lessening the behavioural gaps between Cairo subcultures, reducing environmental pollution, and helps noise alleviation.

That is to say, most strategies are centred on extending the design process, and abolishing physical monopolies over values and ethics.

For the case of my city victorious, drawing-up any values or visions for its contented future highlights an emphasis on its heritage conservation. By heritage I mean both tangible and intangible for what both hold of values. On the one hand, intangible heritage is defined as embracing all forms of traditional and popular culture, i.e. collective works created in a given community and based on traditions. It is transmitted from one generation to the next, constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. It remarks mental and emotional values, including historical values (memorable and pride), aesthetic values and social values.

On the other hand, tangible heritage is all the surviving physical traces of human achievements through time from the ancient archaeological ruins to the hydraulic lifts, from simple country cottage to vast urban zones. It is everything created by human beings as the product of human intelligence and creativity, which allows knowledge and skills to be enhanced and passed on from one person to another and from one generation to the next. It remarks usage and societal needs for life, including economic values, urban values and function values. In that sense, drawing-up Cairo’s developmental objectives are to include community renewal, revitalisation and continuity, education, identity, nationalism and appreciation of the past, pleasure, recreation and increased quality of life, diversity tourism, profit and economic development.

Analysing the results of the empirical study (based on both the observation and the suggestions provided and prioritised by Cairene residents interviewed), and supported by available literature, pivots of Cairo Contented Strategies are sought to transform it into a liveable, a sustainable, a happy and a smart city, as follows:

Cairo Tomorrow	Liveable [referring the people] to	Sustainable [referring the place] to	Happy [referring the social context] to	Smart [referring the governance system] to
Planning and Design Issues to be addressed	comfort, health, safety, well-being, walkability, provision of recreational facilities, accessibility, ...	environmental- responsibility, connectivity, diversity, access to employment, productivity, resilience, ...	community custodiaship, affordability, inclusion, ... engagement, living-cooperation,	leadership, participation, productivity, planning, management, monitoring, ...

Table #4: pivots of Cairo contented strategies

From a different perspective, COAG’s review of capital city strategic planning systems suggest the following ranking of priorities:

- (1) National Urban Policy Objectives.
- (2) Urban Design Protocol (principles).
- (3) Engagement (developing vision – reviewing design options - providing feedback during public exhibition).
- (4) Excellence (leadership - collaboration and team work).
- (5) Objective Quality Measures of Well Being.

Hence, values, visions and strategies for tomorrow's contented Cairo can be formulated what I describe as the humanistic urbanisation manifesto for tomorrow's Cairo contented.

6 CONCLUSION

Along this paper, a review of Cairo's history from its birth as the Egyptian capital of Memphis and On Heliopolis until to date was conducted through a literature review. It revealed the fact that we Cairenes are an amalgam of origins and sub-cultures; theoretically divided Cairo into a six different „urban“ types of districts. A content analysis of available literature from travellers and historians-journals was accomplished to identify the nature of „Cairo“. A methodic grounded theory based on personal interpretation was then employed to explain the term and concepts of viable, liveable, resilient, sustainable, smart and happy. In addition to a random investigation with a number of residents in each of the Cairene districts proved that Cairo indeed is a viable, very resilient city. Reading through the results introduced another term that can be added to the urban description of Cairo, as a “contented” city. A quick review of global city programs together with discussion of the findings of the empirical studies helped in framing major values for developing a vision, strategies, objectives and measures that would guarantee an overall quality of life in all districts for all subcultures, developing Cairo from a „contented“ to a „happy“ city.

With all the challenges confronting it, rendering a Happy Cairo seems like mission impossible. However, long time ago Plato has asserted: “the city is what it is because our citizens are what they are”. Hence, my city is a shared project; its greatest challenge for being happy depends on our willingness to make choices that benefit complete strangers. This means that imaging the future of Cairo for any planning, design or governance intention requires understanding and inferring the functional aspects of the socio-cultural patterns in the city. Hence determining the what, why and how of planning and designing a happy city.

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