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The American University in Cairo  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**The People of The City  
Space, Laboring and Power**  
In Quest of Unraveling the HOW in *Ramlet Bulaq*

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, and Egyptology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
The degree of Master of Arts/Science

By Omnia Khalil

Under the supervision of Dr. Hanan Sabea  
April/2014

*To the Dreamers of Social Justice...*  
*To the Unknown Revolutionaries ...*

## Acknowledgment

*“We have a duty to change our mode of thinking”*

This quote is by David Harvey from his lecture titled The Crisis of Capitalism. This quote is one of the most influential quotes for me. On the one hand, it changed my perception in trying to understand the world and the social phenomenon, and on the other, it even made me rethink January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 revolution in different terms, and prompted me to try to understand it in a different mode. Studying Anthropology changed my mode of thinking, and I am grateful for this shift in my life from being an Architect to the Urban Anthropologist to be.

Without you I would not be the person I am ...

Hanan Sabea, Martina Reiker, Reem Saad, Malak Rouchdy, Mark Westmoreland and Tarek Waly.

Also I am extremely honored to have had attended a semester at Jawaherlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi, India. Thanks to Arunima Gopinath, Mallarika Sinha, Roy and Paporì Bori.

Mariz Kelada, Dalia Abdel Hameed, Noha Khattab and Maya El Helou.

Faten Fadda, my mother, Kamal Khalil, my father and my dear sister Amal Khalil.

Moza Hassan, Ramez Aref, Kholoud Bidak and Maissan Hassan.

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*Here you are the minority  
There you are dominant  
Here you dwell in slums  
There you reign the highways*

*... But somewhere humanity cries  
Somewhere you can feel the pain  
People have become fearful  
People are feeling helpless.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup>Poet by: Moushumi Bhowmik: Singer, composer, lyricist. Source: Guha Thakurta, Meghna (2008)  
'Minorities, Women and Peace: A South Asian Perspective in Paula Banerjee (ed.) *Women in Peace Politics*, New Delhi: Sage.



## 1. Chapter One

### Introduction and Methodology

#### 1.1. Prologue:

While I was walking in the alleys in *Ramlet Bulaq*, a young 11 years old girl was playing in front of her house with other children of her age. She stopped me and said, “Do you know Amr? The man who was killed, he used to get us candies; they said he was a criminal but he was not. He was angry because of Ahmed’s death.” That was a girl’s description of her relationship to the young man *Amr El-Boni*, who worked as a security guard in the Nile City Towers and was killed on August 2012 in *Ramlet Bulaq*, Cairo (Khalil, 2013).<sup>2</sup>

This was not just about a girl, *Amr* or even me. This is a tale that reveals the relationship between people and a space. For me as a researcher and an activist it is a story of existence; and for residents it is a moment of signification in the making of their collective, which has been formed and continues to be formed by their space; it is the past and the present. Their stories stopped me to think as a researcher: how could this be related to the social science project, which is about understanding the social phenomena which we are facing all the time. Moreover it explains the complexity of the social changes and dealing with its mess, confusion and relative disorder (Law 2004: 2). Such societal phenomena are related to people practicing their everyday life. Their routines and doings of the everyday compose their lives; those details that people are doing everyday sometimes appear similar and identical, but such details actually uniquely embody everyone’s day that is simultaneously inflected by the collective of the social worlds they inhabit.

#### 1.2. Research Problem Statement and Research Questions:

##### Research Problem Statement:

I have always believed that one’s context and upbringing greatly affect our ideas, inclinations, and ultimately what we decide to do with our lives. Growing up in a middle class family in the heart of Cairo has greatly fuelled my interest in the city’s relationship with its people. I began to ask myself: what do people need to improve their living conditions? In the process of studying architecture, my awareness and senses developed about how differentiated streets and districts are. Moreover, living

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<sup>2</sup>Personal Interview with a young girl, September 2012, Ramlet Bulaq, Cairo, Egypt.

in a metropolis, pushed me to think about how people live in an urbanized physical setting.

My interest then was translated into engaging marginalized settlements. I conceive marginalized settlements as those geographical areas that are socially and politically relegated by the more powerful to the “dirty and unfitting” spaces in the context of a city like Cairo. I may here use Mohanty’s description of the two third citizens who are always marginalized and discriminated against (Mohanty 2002: 34). While doing fieldwork in different areas, I realized that socially marginalized people are actually representing the potentialities in the space, as what they are doing is mostly meaningful for them and for their community in such spaces (Harcourt and Escobar 2005: 9). And I am using potentiality to connote the daily routine actions of the residents’ life, i.e. someone cooking and selling the cooked food, another one organizing the trash collection, and yet another providing water pipes to the residents in the neighborhood and I am using potentiality as a political position against the discourses by the government and the media of talking about those communities as useless and criminals ones. Their labor and work are presenting potentialities to the whole community. In different neighborhoods I observed women sitting in front of their houses, producing crafts, while talking and observing their children playing around them; they convert the public space into a productive one; this productivity of their hours is a potential for themselves and others. In other words; what I observed related to their work in relation to space. This realization of potentials which people have drove me to revisit my position as an architect. I started in 2006 with my graduation project in Old Cairo, which focused on the tanneries area behind *Magra El Eyoon* aqueduct. The government had planned to move the industrial area outside the urbanized periphery. However they could not as the leather industry provides Egypt 600 Million US dollars annually.<sup>3</sup> At the time I argued what the workers are doing in the area is much more valuable and powerful than the visions of the architects, planners and the municipalities as contained in the master plan. As the residents already set the space to fit their industry, daily work and the selling market; so they managed and made their spaces in order to serve their daily needs. Their everyday of using the spaces of the tanneries and the spaces in front of the buildings surprised me, and forced me to rethink the relation between laboring, space, and what is termed

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<sup>3</sup> Islam Online website. June 2006.

“productivity.” This area that the average citizens, business elites, and municipality officers alleged to be smelling bad and the source of chaos in the middle of Cairo, is in practice one of the most productive areas in Cairo.

Later on, I had a chance to be in an area called *Ramlet Bulaq*; and I will explain later why I was there. So while observing and analyzing the practices in that area, which the Informal Settlements Development Fund (ISDF) classifies as an informal settlement (Figure 1), few questions came to mind. What is the relation between the residents and the physical place? And how is their daily life composed in relation to the space? Is their relation to the neighborhood shaped by the geographical distance to their work? Or their relation to the space has other parameters, which? And how are these other parameters related to laboring? I wanted to know more about the history of the area. Who came, when to do what, and what produced the type of violence, which regularly happened in the area and was articulated in the narratives of its residents? What happened from the perspective of the different residents when the Nile City Towers were built; and how did the Towers affect relationships in the area. As Harcourt and Escobar argue, body, home, environment and social public space are all places of struggle (Harcourt and Escobar 2005: 11); in *Ramlet Bulaq* as I will explain later, many struggles happened on so many different levels; but all related to the place of *Ramlet Bulaq* which is the concern of my research. By tracing the many struggles in *Ramlet Bulaq* from the perspective of its residents through interviews conducted in *Ramlet Bulaq*, I argue that a process of structural violence happened in *Ramlet Bulaq* parallel to the neoliberalism policies by the government and the capital practices of accumulation and dispossession of the families through the process of building the Nile City Towers and thereafter; as the families dispossession continued.. Also the existence of the Nile City Towers converted the residents to laboring subjects and bodies who had to move from one job to another, signify the effects of the implementation of neoliberal policies starting in the 1990s (Bhaduri 2007).<sup>4</sup>

In this thesis I argue that people in *Ramlet Bulaq* constitute their relationship to space in terms of laboring, and in the process produce the very space named *Ramlet*

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<sup>4</sup> “The ruling neoliberal ideology pretends that the benefits of high growth trickle down automatically to the poor, but this proposition is not only empirically dubious; it is politically foolish in a parliamentary democracy, because the speed of trickling down remains unspecified while the government has to maintain a minimum degree of legitimacy to win elections.” Bhaduri, Amit (2007) ‘Alternatives in Industrialisation’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42 (18)

*Bulaq*. My inquiry is about the relationship between labor and space, particularly how people constitute themselves in place by what they are doing, i.e. ‘laboring’. *Ramlet Bulaq* as a space and the transformations that happened occasioned shifts in people’s practices of laboring. Moreover, laboring comprises the pretext of their strategies and tools in coping, adapting, and fighting back. In short, I conceptualize laboring at the heart of political and social relations of power that produce the space of *Ramlet Bulaq* and shape the making of the people of *Ramlet Bulaq*.

In this thesis I aim to unpack the relationship between people and their space in terms of their laboring which is reflected in the histories of the making of *Ramlet Bulaq* as shaped by interactions, confrontations and encounters with circuits of power, which range from the municipalities, the police station, the Nile City towers administration, the local mosque, the local popular committee, the men in the neighborhood, the non-governmental organizations and the activists. My conceptual and methodological frameworks emphasize this understanding on the *How* of *Ramlet Bulaq*, not only *What is Ramlet Bulaq* (Deleuze 1987: 2983). I am using the *how* here referring to the different relations between violence, labor, space, state and capital in addition to the potentialities which I mentioned before. Laboring represent the potentialities in the everyday doings of the residents in the space; parallel to the Nile City Towers, which represent capital interests investing in their space and business, and the apparatus of the state which allied with the Nile Towers by supporting their plans and investments in the name of development and progress. To just name one instance of this mutual alliance between state and capital: an agreement published in the Official newspaper *Al Wakae’ Al Masreya* (The Egyptian Gazette) on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012 declared that the government would legally take over the land of *Ramlet Bulaq*. Subsequently, The Nile City Tower representatives started buying land plots from the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq*. Those developmental plans are for the benefit of the urban elite population and managed by the capital and the state (Bhaduri 2007).<sup>5</sup> As Harvey

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<sup>5</sup>“It certainly benefits the urban elite population, and leads to uncontrolled urbanization and mega cities with growing hunger for energy, water and urban housing space. We are told that world class cities are our goals, so slums have to be cleared without providing resettlement. Livelihoods of both urban and rural communities have to be destroyed for expanding and modernizing the cities. In the process the modes of transports we are creating with ore flyovers for cars, bigger airports, the shopping and housing complex we are promoting become increasingly energy intensive, and the majority of our ordinary citizens who do consume them also have to pay directly or indirectly for this

asserts commercialism and property development occupy the space of a public-private partnership for the benefit of private rather than civic gain by the money of the public (Harvey 1990: 422).

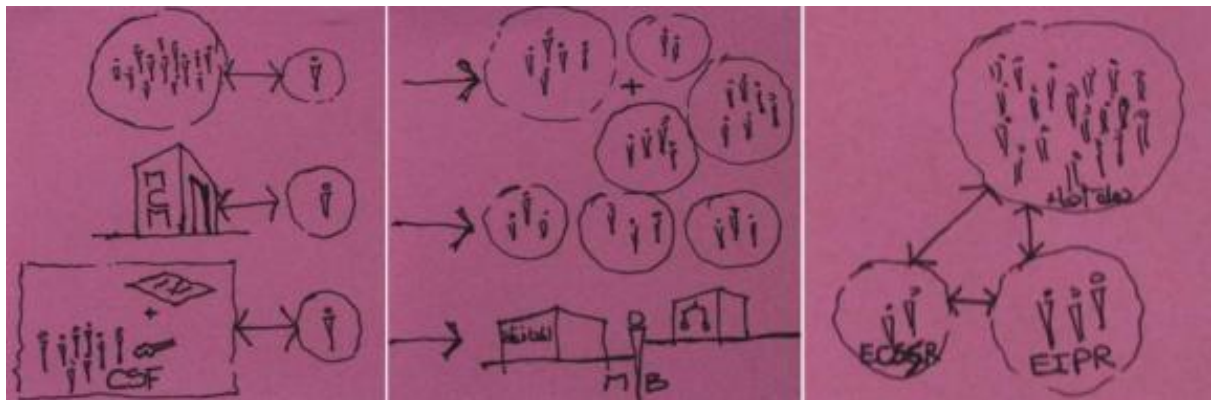


Figure 1<sup>6</sup>: a progress in analyzing power dynamics in *Ramlet Bulaq*

Left: relationship between one resident and (other residents – Nile Towers – State)

Middle: the residents broke into varies social groups, capitalism power broke into different groups such as; Nile tower, Muslim Brotherhoods and other charity NGOs, and the relation to state broke into Cairo governorate, court and Central security forces.

Right: Different activism groups who are engaging in *Ramlet Bulaq*, as Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) who are offering legal support, Egyptian Center for Social and Economic Rights (ECSEB) support legally as well, and an independent youth group of activists who helping mobilizing the demonstrations in the area.

### Research Questions:

#### 1. *Ramlet Bulaq* and changes due to neoliberalism!

How did the construction of The Nile City Towers change relations and lives in *Ramlet Bulaq*? What were the neoliberal policies? How did urban development affect the riverbanks and *Ramlet Bulaq* as well? How did *Ramlet Bulaq* become classified as a slum? What are the parameters along which an area is classified as formal or informal? Is it measurable? I examine thus the transformations that occurred in tandem with neoliberal politics, which changed the spaces in *Bulaq* area according to developments plans. I ask: How did these changes affect *Ramlet Bulaq*, its internal relations and labor practices, and how did the residents constitute themselves in spaces confronting these transformations..

#### 2. How is *Ramlet Bulaq* composed?

pattern of consumption."Bhaduri, Amit (2007) 'Alternatives in Industrialisation' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42 (18)

<sup>6</sup>Sketch by the author.

How space is constituted in relation to people is what I am interested in, in addition to when and why people first moved to *Ramlet Bulaq*. What was their relation to the state? The concepts of space and power will be used here to understand how people started forming their communities i.e. *Ramlet Bulaq*, how did they establish themselves in the place, and why this spot of land? What is the urban composition of *Ramlet Bulaq* and how did it change over time? And what are the social networks and relationships in the area?

### 3. Structural violence and the struggle for being in *Ramlet Bulaq*!

The structural violence happened in *Ramlet Bulaq* subsequent to different events; some events signaled direct violence as someone was killed or shot or tortured by police men, in other events it was direct as people living there were afraid of certain powers or the process of dispossession of the families. All that happened according to certain capital powers and also the process of accumulation and dispossession being reproduced under the rubric of neoliberal practices.

### 4. The Everyday in *Ramlet Bulaq*!

Here I explore the relation between power, space, labor and marginality, and the social relations that changed before and after the clashes in August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012. Moreover, I ask how the January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 revolution rendered different tactics and strategies possible to the residents of Cairo, here primarily the *Ramlet Bulaq* residents, and made them change by including (or excluding) tools and tactics in their struggles? In other words; why did *Ramlet Bulaq* residents begin to demonstrate and/or have rallies in 2012? How did the revolution influence their tactics and their negotiation practices with the different authorities?

### 1.3. The Significance and the context of *Ramlet Bulaq*:

*Bulaq* as a name is basically a derivative word of *Belaq* that is originally from the old Egyptian language that means anchor where ships rest. *Bulaq* area formed in consequence of the eastern shifts of the River Nile since 1281 to 1403. *Al-Nasser Mohamed Ibn Qualwu'n* was the first to encourage urbanization processes in the area by building mosques, palaces, houses and gardens for the elite to enjoy the quiet view of the Nile river away from the crowded downtown (Figure 2&3).<sup>7</sup> This process of

<sup>7</sup> A Mamluk Sultan (1285 – 1403),  
<http://www.alsaanews.com/2012/12/%D8%A8%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1->

urbanization has been dynamic and it changed over time in relation to political, economic and social factors that outgrew the area. Later on, the port of *Bulaq* was one of the most important ports in Cairo until *Mohamed Ali* constructed *Alexandria* port. Then the transformation came after *Mohamed Ali*'s urban changes in connecting *Bulaq* with different districts. *Mohamed Ali* started some manufacturing in *Bulaq*. In the 1950s and 1960s, after the Egyptian Army Revolution of 1952, a number of industries formed in the area, mainly a glass factory and other workshops of metalwork (Figure 4&5). Most of the area residents worked in the factory and the workshops (Khalil 2014).<sup>8</sup> Then *Mohamed Anwar El-Sadat*, who was the Egyptian president from 1970 to 1981, took the decision of opening up the economy, which changed the industries and investments in Egypt. Hence, lots of investors decided to invest their money in towers that contain hotels, malls and office buildings on the riverbanks and they hired some of the residents in jobs inside the towers. Recently in the 1990s and 2000s, *Ramlet Bulaq* became administratively part of *Bulaq* district located in South Cairo Governorate. The area is 4 feddans and has about 600 families. The Nile City towers were built in 1996 by Orascom Company and located along the Nile banks to the west of *Ramlet Bulaq*. Nile towers' investors first privatized then demolished some of glass factories at which most of the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* were working. Men then worked as construction workers in the construction fields of the towers. After the construction of the Nile City Towers; they used the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* as cheap labor. The administration hired many of the residents in different positions. Those jobs were gendered and ranged from security guards, cleaners, to bodyguards and waiters (Khalil 2013).<sup>9</sup> This is how the laboring in *Ramlet Bulaq* constitutes the relation to the space. In addition to the above, some residents work from their houses in jobs that are serving the other residents; so they constitute their labor in relation to space. In here, I use labor in its so many forms;

... and so has its exploitation. One kind of productive labor that performed by both women and men in the fields is subject to exploitation by the owners of the land. Then there is the labor performed by half of the population – household labor, which is

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%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A9-  
%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%A7-2/

<sup>8</sup>Personal Interview, February 2014, Ramlet Bulaq, Cairo, Egypt.

<sup>9</sup>Personal Interview, January 2014, Ramlet Bulaq, Cairo, Egypt.

considered unproductive. Women perform this labor, and men, even men who labor in the fields of the landlord, exploit this labor of the women. (Manimala 1984: 122).

In *Ramlet Bulaq* other residents work in the management of a parking lot for employees' cars in front of the Towers. Some of the women in *Ramlet Bulaq* are working from their houses; they cook in their own kitchens and sell food for other residents.



Fig. 2<sup>10</sup>

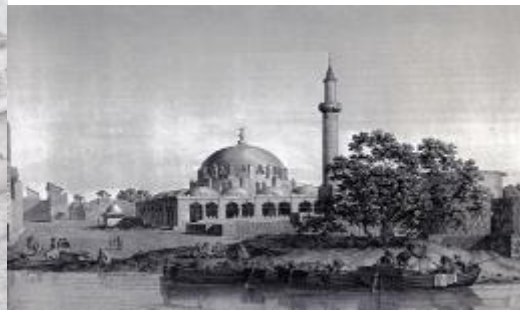


Fig. 3<sup>11</sup>



Fig. 4<sup>12</sup>



Fig. 5<sup>13</sup>

#### 1.4. Conceptual framework and Methodology.

I am influenced by the dialectical mode of thinking and *Archeology of Knowledge* by *Michel Foucault* that inspired me regarding re-understanding how to analyze the social phenomenon, and how to question the complexity of individuals, societies in relation to the structure that they inhabit. The question is not just about What, Where, When or Why but more about How. Cairo as a city of transformations made me think about how those transformations occurred. As Foucault argued:

<sup>10</sup> Figure 2: Bulaq Map, 1798. Source: Napoleon I, Emperor of the French, &Néret, G. (1994). *Description de l'egypte*. Köln: Benedikt Taschen.

<sup>11</sup> Figure 3: Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Figure 4: Ramlet Bulaq, 2012. Source: Google Earth

<sup>13</sup> Figure 5: Ibid.



.. Must I suppose that in my discourse I can have no survival? And that in speaking I am not banishing my death, but actually establishing it; or rather that I am I am abolishing all interiority in that exterior that is so indifferent to my life, and so neutral, that it makes no distinction between my life and my death. (Foucault 1972: 210)

Thus, my research journey is about discovering, unraveling and re-understanding what lies beyond the obvious. For example, why people changed their work? Or how they see their case in the court against the government regarding the land? Why are the women cooking from their houses and/or occupying some public spaces in front of their houses to cook or sell products? (Figure 6)

Moreover, my work is shaped by what John Law said in his book *After Methods*<sup>14</sup> regarding the uncertainty of researchers, and who actually asks questions without asserting the answers? In other words, I cannot assume that women are working in front of their houses just because they do not have a space inside their houses; or because they did not find a job in other places. The more I asked, the more I discovered that they were born in the area and their mothers were cooking for other women and the working women consider themselves as advisors for the other young women. And here the words of Deleuze emerged in my mind. Deleuze explained the rhizome as a plateau of connecting different aspects and powers, the intersectionality between different points of influence and some of it are intersected,; and others are not but have a domain of influence around it. (Deleuze 1987: 9). I start with John Law as an interlocutor in unpacking social science phenomena that are always messy, diffuse and complex (Law 2004: 2). Moreover, Law in speaking about challenging our naturalized assumptions appeared as if in conversation with Foucault's insistence on unraveling of the obvious or understanding the things that are in front of our eyes in the society. *Ramlet Bulaq* has so many influential powers which need to be revisited and revealed in an attempt to understand how power dynamics are shaped, what kind of dynamics and how they influence the experiences and the everyday of the residents in the area. Using Law, Foucault and Deleuze in the conceptual framework is an attempt to unpack relations and complex social realities.

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<sup>14</sup> "Yet things are on the move. Nevertheless, the 'research methods' passed down to us after a century of social science tend to work on the assumption that the world is to be properly understood as a set of fairly specific, determinate, and more or less identifiable processes"(Law 2004: 5).

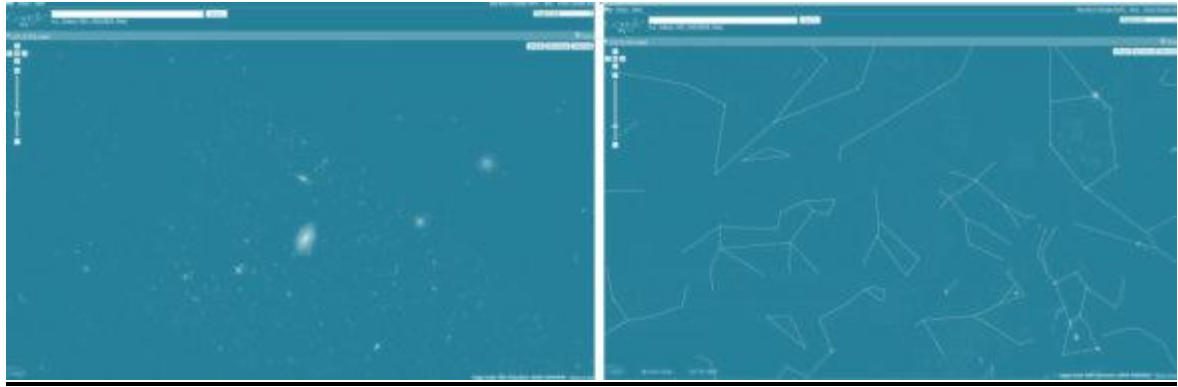


Figure 6: left: how the universe looks like - Right: how the learning process structured our minds to map it and see it.

### **Conceptual Framework:**

“The world is not to be understood in general by adopting a methodological version of auditing, regularities and standardizations are incredibly powerful tools but they set limits” (Law 2004: 6). My ethnographic study deals with the research questions through a methodological foundation of having three everyday reflecting different phases in the lives of the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq*. Those three time events are; first before the building of The Nile City Towers; second after the building of The Nile city Towers and before the clashes of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012; third would be after August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012. I clarified before that the building of the Nile City Towers is significant for the residents in their everyday life activities and labor practices. Some of them changed their jobs or what they were doing because when the towers were built, the internal dynamics between the residents changed; as some wanted to leave the area and to sell the land to get rid of the history and violence they faced; others wanted to stay and continue their struggle. The people who are still working in jobs inside the towers have daily fears of losing their source of living. Moreover the families, whose children are in prison because of that day of clashes after the killing of *Amr El Boni*, are still waiting for their children to regain their freedom and then decide what to do, whether to leave the area or stay. I will relate these everyday details to the life histories and narrations of events of each informant. In the book “Escape Routes”, Papdopoulos wrote about the concept of the everyday and how it changed according to the social networks and relations; for him the neoliberal turn with the subjective desires for freedom became a mode of individual regulation, which increases the individualistic practices of everyday life and the individualistic modes of relating to self and others (Papdopoulos 2008: 137). I second what Papdopoulos argued in his book regarding the everyday and theoretically I will use it

as a framework to understand how the individual practices of different groups in *Ramlet Bulaq* changed. This overarching conceptual-methodological framework intersects with a range of other concepts that organize my analysis in this thesis, namely space, laboring and marginality in relation to power. And my journey still continues as an engaged researcher who is trying to re-understand certain social phenomena in addition to responding to Harvey's quote "We have a duty to Change our mode of thinking" (Harvey 2010). As an engaged researcher I build on Wallerstein's argument:

the west invented this curious system where "So instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embed in the economic system" (Polayni 1957: 57) All civilizations sensibly avoided this inversion being substantively irrational this system is ultimately untenable, it remains to be seen however what more fully rational system mankind can invent now, and if it can. (Wallerstein: 1992)

And I am arguing that "Yes the mankind will invent and reach another human context to live in".

### **Methodology:**

The ethnographic fieldwork that I conducted in *Ramlet Bulaq* presents four main characters who recounted most of the narratives about *Ramlet Bulaq*. So they are the narrators in this thesis and they are *O'm Fares* who is a housewife in her 50s, married with children and grandchildren. *Fares*, her son, who works as a driver in a company, *O'm Kimo*; a woman who cooks *Koshari* and sells in in *Ramlet Bulaq* and *A'm Gaber* who is the head of a popular local committee, who initially worked as an employee in the electricity company, then he left and became a taxi driver.

My ethnographic research engaged more than one family in *Ramlet Bulaq*. Different interlocutors were chosen in order to gauge different facades of the history of the area, so that the relationship between space and labor are rendered clearer. People from different age groups, gender and professions were selected depending on their relation to the neighborhood; as some of the residents did not live their whole life or were born in the same area. The interviews clarify the everyday of informants. The relations between the everyday of their lives covers the three periods of time:

First, the time before the building of the Nile City Towers to clarify relationships between the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* to the Towers, the area, and the government.

Second, the period before the accident of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012, as their relationship to the Towers and the government changed after they became the security guards of the towers. Finally, after the accident of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 that is after *Mohamed Morsi* became the Egyptian president and a new government was instituted with seemingly different sets of policies.

I also mapped out the written histories and narratives that are produced in archives, books and media, which helped me to understand how *Ramlet Bulaq* and *Bulaq* as a district were historically composed. Participant observation was my primary method as an engaged researcher in *Ramlet Bulaq*. The observations were important in understanding the daily details of laboring in the area that is the focus in this research. Oral and life history interviews were conducted with some women, men and children. I selected participants in this research through snow bowling technique to satisfy the criteria of the age group, gender, profession and length of residence. I started with personal interviews with a number of residents who were members in the popular committee formed after January 25th, 2011. I relied on those members to put me in contact with different households, which were the focus of participant observation. In addition to personal interviews with members of the popular committee, other interviews were conducted in different local institutions which are operated by local residents i.e. mosque, primary school and civil society organizations. Being an architect pushed me to use visual media tools i.e. maps, pictures and videos in order to map the interrelationships in the research. Visual media tools are important; for example having the different maps from different years gave me an understanding of how the area and the surrounding context developed over time; connecting it to the political and economic status of Egypt formed another layer of understanding to my analysis. Moreover adding maps drawn by the residents in describing how the area looked years ago helped me in visualizing the details, their perceptions of the area, and what the area meant in their own lives. Other media like videos were useful in showing how people told their story in front of the media and how the media portrayed them at different occasions, clashes and events.

## 2. Chapter Two

### The Neoliberalism and the Capital

#### 2.1.Introduction:

In April 2013, I was invited to give a talk at a conference called Learning From Cairo (LFC<sup>15</sup>). The conference was about Cairo's urban status and concerned with world-wide notions about formal and informal urban communities. Some international speakers were invited to give talks about the cities from which they came. One urban sociologist and activist from India discussed the development project of Delhi 2020 and the status of informal settlements and forced evictions in India; then an architect from South Africa addressed the governmental urban planning development project of Cape Town 2030. Another couple from Turkey talked about Istanbul 2020 as a future urban planning project as well. In Egypt for the last 10 years the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP) that is a unit under the supervision of the Ministry of Housing (MOH) prepared what has been called Cairo 2050 and after the Egyptian revolution of January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 they changed the name to be Egypt 2052 because Cairo 2050 was managed and created by the political committee in the National Democratic Party (NDP) supervised by *Gamal Mubarak* who is the son of removed president *Hosni Mubarak*.

In the following paragraphs I am elaborating the analysis by different theorists who analyzed the relation between neoliberalism, modernity and the city. I understand the global projects of the future imagined cities in relation to the political economy system that is neoliberalism, and answers the question of why governments are seeking a future imagined cities. In the rest of this chapter I analyze the project of Cairo 2050 in Egypt. Then I relate the neoliberal political economy practices to *Ramlet Bulaq* and how its agenda affected the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq*.

The global strategy that hypothetically began with modernization processes and then matured with neoliberal parameters adopted by most governments followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, similar to what happened after World War II (Harvey

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<sup>15</sup> Learning from Cairo, co-organized by CLUSTER (Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research) and the American University in Cairo, was an international symposium that sought to engage the current political and urban transformation unfolding in Cairo as a critical context for examining relevant international case studies and best practices in areas ranging from housing, transportation, public space and local governance to informality. The conference emphasized a comparative and interdisciplinary approach bringing practitioners, academics, officials and local stakeholders into dialogue, with the objective of generating an ongoing critical urban discourse and future visions for Cairo. <http://learningfromcairo.org/lfc/overview/>

2007: 23). Interestingly enough, David Harvey argued in his paper titled “Neoliberalism as a Creative Destruction” that neoliberalism benefits certain social sectors in society, in addition that neoliberalism asserted the economic growth for the benefit of that sector without the others; which consequently widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Harvey defined neoliberalism as a political economy theory that gives the freedom for human well-being in the society to maximize their entrepreneurs within the institutional framework that preserve their individual liberty, private property rights and free trade, and at the same time under the protection of the State to preserve this institutional framework to secure those practices (Ibid: 22). Harvey continued in elaborating that neoliberalism works as a destructive tool to division of labor, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes and ways of life (Ibid: 23). Neoliberalism succeeded in restoring class power and its theoretical utopia has worked as a system of legitimization and justification its practices, which were embedded within a class project (Ibid: 29). Harvey analyzed how neoliberalism came with huge success to the upper class and they celebrated their victory. Neoliberalism thus asserted what Marx wrote about the consequences of capitalism regarding commodification and privatization of properties as the State is not anymore the controller of the properties and/or to the services (Ibid: 36).

Similar to Harvey, J. Ferguson related urban planning to communities, modernity and neoliberalism. He argued that the modern state imposed the terms of formalization and it created this binary opposition between formal and informal and entrenched the image that all of the so called “informal” is bad (Ferguson 2007: 71). Moreover he argued that neoliberalism got new sorts of programmatic thinking about poverty by which a new relation between formal and informal has been created (Ibid: 72). This programmatic thinking poses informal urbanization as an unauthorized kind of new communities that are seen as dangerous and disorderly; where in the contrary that modernist urban planning establish ordering and grid spaces then a political order, so the illegibility of those spontaneous constructed communities is always offering illegal zones for the state (Ibid: 72). He continues in analyzing how neoliberalism as an economic system dedicated to untrammled rule of market and to the dismantling of the welfare state, but the informal as an economy or communities are getting out of the welfare system at all, which creates problems to the formal economy system as those communities move out of the ideological representation of the created model of neoliberalism (Ibid: 76). The Problem of the informal economy

and communities in Ferguson's point of view is the kind of resistance of being completely outside of the state power and regulation (Ibid: 84). In my analysis, I second what Ferguson said and in addition to this is the influence of the given models about housing and urban planning approaches and how they influence people's imagination about their future and the houses they would imagine to live in. The pre-given models about houses and planning made people imagine the houses they should live, and flats in big buildings in order to fit into modernity's project of valuing a particular standard of measure of "modern living." Their imagination about their neighborhood and because of the models in which the society, the media and the state are talking about; prompts them to evaluate their living conditions and/or their houses appearance, and they underestimate what they have, and when I asked the question in *Ramlet Bulaq* to different people "what things you would love to change in your house?" the answer varied between having a flat in a high rise building or to have a house that looks like the Turkish houses as some famous Turkish Television series are always on television, so people grasp their imagination and the idea about good house from what they see in the media.

James Scott added on that by arguing that the state has a problem with people who is moving around, as this mobility challenges the control of people that the state is seeking (Scott 1998: 1). Also the state is seeking standardization, legalization, counting, mapping, having a grid system and arranging everything in order to be in control of its territories (Ibid:2). Scott related this organization of everything to modernity and to achieve goals such as efficiency, organized city, planned village and so on. This process of rendering legible and simple by state apparatus is turned into an obsession whereby certain forms of planning and social organizations such as formal transportation, hubs, large factories are promoted, while others which defy the grid are excluded and forced into non-existence (Ibid: 5). "In sum the legibility of the society provides the capacity of large social engineering, high modernist ideology provides the desire the authoritarian state provides the determination to act on that desire" (Ibid: 5). Scott mentioned that this kind of authoritarian policies of the state is an imperialism of high modernist and planned social order and he critiques this model of homogenization of a society (Ibid: 6). Finally, Scott is making a clear political state against the global capitalism in which is the most powerful force for homogenization where the state is in control of local differences and verities (Ibid: 8).

From the previous analysis about the city and the neoliberalism; the first is about the global strategy of urbanization and modernization to the cities, and the second is about the neoliberalism and how it connects and changes the social and the economy in societies. And in the following paragraphs I elaborate more on the national level and the influences of neoliberal political agenda on urban spaces. Moreover and on a micro scale, I elaborate on neoliberal policies and their powers in *Ramlet Bulaq* particularly as this pertains to urban composition and its social life.

## **2.2.Cairo and the neoliberalism political agenda (1981-2014):**

On the urban level of policy making; Cairo 2050 project is the most important step and decision in the neoliberal agenda in the last decade. The urban planning project was designed in late 2000s by the political committee inside The National Democratic Party that was the government party at the time. This committee was headed by *Gamal Mubarak* who is the son of removed president *Hosni Mubarak*. The project consisted of lots of huge investment projects in the Great Cairo Region. The project is an imaginary vision of how Cairo should look like in the year of 2050. Lots of the so called informal settlements would be replaced with projects that have huge investments; like towers with multi-use functions, offices, malls, and hotels, etc.. And along with the new spaces of malls and hotels, there is a certain citizen who is imagined to live in those spaces. Mostly it is not the citizen we are seeing everyday in Cairo street life; nor the citizen who is a vendor in the metro station and public transportation. It is another citizen who can fit, inhabit and afford this style of life that is composed of huge fancy shopping malls, office buildings and lots of high rise towers and bridges. The project's document was created by the official government to prioritize urban development projects in the Great Cairo Region (GCR) in Egypt. The vision was secret and the process of designing was not participatory at all, not on the professional level or on the citizens' social level.

The document contained a presentation and number of videos named "Cairo 2050 within a national vision of Egypt". In its first slides; the document compared Cairo to other cities like Paris, Tokyo, New York, Seoul and Mexico in their numbers of populations. To justify "why a vision for Cairo?" the document presents a number of slides of other world cities and their visions like Sydney 2030, Paris 2020, London 2020, Abu Dhabi 2030, Singapore 2050 and Shanghai 2050 and then to advanced stages for Tokyo 2050 and London 2066. They titled the slides with the heading of reviewing and studying the international experience. In their description of Cairo, a



list of recent problems is presented: high residential density in the main existing agglomeration, rising traffic congestion, limited use of culture and natural resources, mediocre living conditions in some areas and limited green spaces. The document clarifies the objectives for Cairo as raising the quality of life standards to be ranked among the best 30 countries around the world, instead of the current ranking 84 of the 100 countries. The vision also aims to raise human development standards to become one of the best 30 countries in the world instead of the current ranking 111 of the 180 countries. Finally, the document talked about raising the quality of Egyptian production (Made in Egypt), reaching higher rates in sustainable economic development (not less than 7.5% per year), achieving social equity (between different segments of society), restructuring the demographic distribution of Egypt to enhance the benefit of Egypt's geographical location and its natural potentials, building an integrated society in which all can enjoy the rights of citizenship, and finally maximizing the effectiveness of Egypt's regional role on the Arab, Islamic, and African levels (Cairo 2050 vision project document 2009).<sup>16</sup>

Given the hegemony of statistics and standards, it is farfetched to imagine that those who prepared the preparers of the document would have conducted an analytical assessment based ethnographic study or social networking and relations. Similarly, it is rather unthinkable that the documents, beside ranking Egypt and/or Cairo in the world wide lists, that it would consider people's lives and living conditions and what is the real status of the mentioned neighborhoods, or where are the different potentialities in their districts and its people.

In response to the document and vision, an urban collective called "Cairo from Below" presented a summary of a critique about the project of Cairo 2050 from a professional perspective.

Cairo 2050, if followed, would create more socioeconomic inequality and increase traffic congestion by pushing lower-income residents to the periphery of the city, and reducing the environmental sustainability the city presently has. Moreover this document was created in isolation and is a classic example of outdated top-down planning. Other forms of planning engage the public in a meaningful way at multiple stages of the design and through public participation

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<sup>16</sup> <http://cairofrombelow.org/cairo2050/>

and review to ensure transparency of all land transactions. (Cairo from Below 2012).<sup>17</sup>

Cairo From Below is collective group comprised of different professionals and architects who are active in the social media platforms, some of them are Egyptians and others are not. They have a website on the internet where they posted issues about different urban matters in Cairo. In their critique to Cairo 2050 they raised the social question of who are the targeted populations of the project and how the project will evacuate and demolish thousands of families in Cairo and that we have no idea where those families should go.

As the critique mentioned; the project would force the lower-income residents of Cairo to evict to the periphery of Cairo, such as new settlements of *Setta October* (6<sup>th</sup> of October), *Al-Kahera El-Gedida* (New Cairo) and *As Salam* districts. The mentioned districts are ones located in the desert of Egypt and about 50 to 70 kilometers far away from the center of the city. Those new districts were built in 1980s and 1990s when the Egyptian government decided to urbanize the desert in order to have less population in Cairo. Then the government invested huge amounts of money in those districts, but no one moved to those areas as there were no services, transportations or jobs.

In the document the vision of Cairo 2050, the authors legitimize forced eviction in the name of increasing the inhabited area and moving some residents from Cairo to other spots in order to re-distribute the population and to have the Cairo center as touristic cultural hub. The peripheries of Cairo to which residents are to be moved are away from the center of Cairo, with poor public transport connections. In her chapter “Transport Thugs: spatial marginalization in Cairo suburb” Dalia Wahdan argues how spatial location creates and then reproduce people’s marginality. Wahdan contends that *Setta October’s* (6<sup>th</sup> of October) demographic composition has been influenced by the jobs that were made possible in the settlement through capital investments. The absence of basic services and availability of infrastructure meant that only a select group of residents with capital outlay could afford moving into these areas. (Wahdan 2012: 114). Wahdan further elaborated on the complaints of *Setta October’s* residents, which ranged from the shortage of water, electricity, bread and public transportations, to questions about the safety of public spaces, street lighting and affordable means of

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<sup>17</sup> <http://cairofrombelow.org/cairo2050/>

entertainment (Wahdan 2012: 116). To complement Wahdan's findings, I present below the perceptions of one of the residents who moved to *Setta October*.

Another concern embedded within Cairo 2050 vision is premised on extending *Game'et El-Dewal El-Arabeya* Street that starts north east to south west, to reach the Giza Pyramids Plateau and the Sphinx heritage area. This part of the vision is called Khufu Plaza. While the document placed the Khufu Plaza project under the umbrella of "Upgrading of *Nazlit Es-Seman* Area" while going through the project there is nothing concerning the upgrading of *Nazlit Es-Seman*. It is written in the document:

Transformation of *Nazlit Es-Seman* area (253 acres) to an open Museum through the disclosure of the valley temple of King Khufu. Considering the social aspect of the residents, through their reallocation in alternate housing area built partially on the same area and available spaces. Diverting their economic activity into newly allocated services and increasing the employment opportunities. And Creation of convenient touristic activities to utilize the opportunities of the unique site. (Cairo 2050 vision project document 2009).<sup>18</sup>

The text is complemented with drawings and three-dimensional graphic illustrations to explain where the international hotels and the open museum will be located; beside the avenue and the plaza there is a huge square. The avenue comprises the main street and the extension of *Game'et El-Dewal El-Arabeya* street and is about 15 kilometers long and is 600 meters wide. The document also envisioned a new village called *Nazlit Es-Seman* with housing units. *Nazlit Es-Seman* is a highly dense in population area that is located just beside the Giza Heritage Plateau and the Sphinx. Most of the residents live there are working in different activities in the tourism in order to provide the tourists who are coming daily to the plateau. So they provide them rides on camels and horses and sell to them pharonic elements and accessories.

To legitimize the project and vision which it expresses, the document provides other international examples of how people around the world are dealing with the Egyptian monuments by drawing on the Champ Elyees in Paris. There is a huge avenue 8 kilometers long and 75 meters wide that is built. Similarly, the Washington Mall in the U.S. is 3.5 kilometers long and 250 meters wide and an Egyptian Obelisk is located in its half third. In the proposed project, Khufu Avenue

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<sup>18</sup> [www.Cairofrombelow.org/caio2050](http://www.Cairofrombelow.org/caio2050)

would extend over 250 meters which means that parts of *Bulaq El Dakror*, *Haram Street*, *Faisal Street* and *Omraneya* will be demolished, and at least 200 thousand families<sup>19</sup> who are living there will be evacuated. In the document they spoke about a “rarefaction” of *Bolak El Dakror* and *Nazlit Es-Seman*; the term of rarefaction means reducing the density; but they did not clarify how they will do this and where they will place the families.

Another project from Cairo 2050 vision relates to the more than two hundred twenty acres<sup>20</sup> in *Imbaba*, which comprise the location of the old airport in *Imbaba*. The government proposed to invest in the area by building hotels, cinemas, malls and office buildings. The project in the Cairo 2050 document called it Land of the Airport. The vision is of flying bridges with metal structures. The area of *Imbaba's* airport is located between the district of *Imbaba* that is known to be for working classes and *Mohandiseen* that is marked for middle upper class people. The debate about *Imbaba* Airport started back in 2010 when *Imbaba's* residents asked the then governor to turn the area of the old airport into a public park, schools and other services that *Imbaba's* residents are in need of. The residents formed a committee called “The Committee of defending *Imbaba* Airport Land” and they succeeded to get the planned blue prints of the proposed project and the allocation of 70 feddans out of 220 feddans of the Airport land which was planned as a public garden and a number of affordable housing units beside a number of other services. The garden was supposed to be opened beginning of 2014 (Al-Masry Al-Youm 2013).<sup>21</sup> And no one knows what the other 70 percent of the land will be.

There are so many projects like *Nazlit El Seman* and *Imbaba's* Airport to talk about and all are mostly the same. The government plans – and has the power to implement - investment projects that will only benefit a certain strata in the society at the expense of the poorer residents who are removed to the peripheries of Cairo. In the last decade, newspapers and various media outlets advocated and promoted the idea that slums and informal dwellings are the cause of the chaos in Cairo and that they should get them out of the city to live in the desert outside Cairo in order to make Cairo a city with a lesser population.

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<sup>19</sup> Number of families is according to Giza governorate website.

<sup>20</sup> Feddan = Acre

<sup>21</sup> Al-Masry Al-Youm Newspaper, July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/241390>

I would like to elaborate more on the relationship between neoliberalism and the social; how people would express the changes in their everyday under a neoliberal agenda and policy. In 2008, a massive catastrophe happened in *Dewei'a* area where a huge rock collapsed above many rooms and small houses that left about 119 persons dead and hundreds of injured (Al-Masry Al-Youm 2013).<sup>22</sup> Consequently, the government decided to form a unit to develop the informal settlements that is called Informal Settlements Development Fund (ISDF). Since 2008 ISDF did not develop any of the so-called informal settlements, the unit did researches in Egypt to classify the danger degree of the informal settlements. There are degrees of danger that are taken from the international UN-Habitat organization. The scale of dangerous degrees depends on how dangerous the houses are to the persons living in them. Many architects, urban planners and urban activists believe that Informal Settlements Development Fund unit was formed in order to choose certain areas and legalize the evacuation process for those areas under the label that those areas are dangerous to their residents' lives.

By the end of 2011 a woman from *Dewei'a* area said:

There is a military camp here in *Dewei'a* in an area called *El-Wahayed*, everyone knows if they build it for us, it will satisfy the residential needs for *Dewei'a* and *Manshiet Nasser*. Yes it is a military land but it is unused, we have the right to take it and they promised us to build residential blocks over this piece of land. We waited for 30 years and we can wait another couple of years to finish the constructions and move. They build for so many other families why not us? There are lots of empty lands in *Dewei'a*; it is not fair to move us to *Setta October* (6<sup>th</sup> of October). We started here long ago, we were carrying the water from one hour and half walking distance and we bear it, the electricity is always causing us problems, the cables get damaged and it hurts our little children. We agreed and are satisfied and we do not want to go far away. But now they say that they want to evacuate us and move to *Setta October* (6<sup>th</sup> of October) that is 50 kilometers away from here. How can we do this? I work here and my husband's work is here as well and the schools are here, all the services are here. Moreover we build our houses here, we urbanized the area, why should we leave all of this and move to the desert in *Fayoum* road? We just want one apartment, why should we move to 6<sup>th</sup> of October? This is unfair and we will not go and in the day when they will come to evacuate us, we will tell them to demolish our houses over us; we will not go anywhere. Why don't they move us somewhere

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<sup>22</sup> Al-Masry Al-Youm Newspaper. May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013.<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/319154>

near? There are so many beautiful areas that can house us. We already witnessed our area when it was a desert and we urbanized it, now they want to move us to another desert that has nothing. They want to move us for the benefit of the new wall gated community in *Mokattam* that is called Uptown Cairo, for the benefits of the upper class not to have an ugly view over our hoses from above. And we know that the apartments in 6<sup>th</sup> of October are so small, and how can we pay for the transportations to go to work? Our wages will never be enough for all of these expenses. We will not go anywhere from here and we will die here (Khalil 2011).<sup>23</sup>

After six months I decided to visit the apartments in *Setta October* (6<sup>th</sup> of October) where the government moved residents from all over Cairo. And I met a woman in her late 60s who talked about her experience in *Setta October* (6<sup>th</sup> of October) saying:

The government gave us the apartment; the government gave thousands of apartments to people who do not worth to take a flat and all take flats by bribes. The house I was living in was 4 floors; my elder daughter lost her daughter in the collapse of the house, my 4 children, each took a flat. The corruption happened that in day of the demolishing the houses, another 4 to 5 rooms were built in the same area of the demolished houses by strangers, where the next day they received apartments using bribes to government employees. Other people who have the right to take flats are not taking it as they do not have money to pay bribes; and the government knows. Regarding my living here; I had an apartment with a bedroom and a living room bigger twice than this whole apartment. I could not get my furniture in this space, and other residents in others flats put their furniture in the street after they arrived here, the flat is too small ranging between 40 to 60 square meters, how can we put anything inside? There is nothing here, people had to sell their stuff for a living, and they sold their gold or whatever goods they have so they can afford living in here. I started to sell some vegetables in the street; but it is so hard to get a car from the vegetables market then transport the tomatoes then sell it, people do not buy, they go so far away to get things in cheaper prices; people here are devastated. My grandson stopped going to school since we arrived here, as we have to take Toktok with 5 pounds to drop them to school then waiting for them in front of the school till they finish to get them back with another 5 pounds. To get anything here you have to pay at least 5 pounds to reach the closest market, hospital or school. Moreover monthly, I have to pay more than 20 pounds to reach my old district to get the stipend of my husband. How can we live like this? For sure our old districts were better; all the services were within a

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<sup>23</sup> Khalil, Omnia. 2012. Egyptian Urban Action documentary movie.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2i8HVnKtIs>

walking distance, or with a bus that would cost us one pound for going and coming back. (Khalil 2012).<sup>24</sup>

The woman's words expressed how harsh the life they are living in those new settlements has been. This family's life completely changed because they took a flat in the government project and they did not have any other choice.

I believe that to understand part of the corruption and the competition between people to get apartments through the corrupted regime would affirm Hickel (2014) in his argument about how neoliberalism undermines the livelihoods with violent actions in competition to get jobs and housing (Hickel 2014: 104). In other words; people who live in informal settlements accused of failing the census and the surveys that be conducted to regulate how they would be displaced, and challenge the allegation that the residents are doing this to get more apartments from the state. Residents do not trust the state anymore and the state provides them all the time with false promises, so the minute the residents know that they would get anything from the government they would lie about it as they are trying to get the maximum benefits they can.

The two women talked about what is neoliberalism, as all the benefits are geared towards a certain strata of the society, but not them. And as I mentioned previously, Harvey described neoliberalism as the creativity of destruction; also Pierre Bourdieu spoke about this destruction in his paper "The essence of neoliberalism" as he mentioned the visible difference due to the implementation of the neoliberalism, is not only the increase in poverty and the number of poor people in the most advanced societies, but also the extraordinary growth in the income differences. Bourdieu focused on the power of neoliberalism and how it draws its social power from the economic and political powers of people's interests like stockholders, financial operators, industrialists, conservative or social-democratic politicians.. The people believed in the utopia of neoliberalism that resulted in huge differences in the individuals' incomes and increased the poverty segments in societies. Bourdieu concluded his article highlighting the managerial role that the State is playing in a neoliberal regime, which end up being destructive to the labor market and individual needs (Bourdieu 1998).

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

Globally in the 1970s as Harvey outlines, there was the beginning of a shift in economic policies to liberalization. In Egypt this coincided with the times of Sadat, who moved into policies geared towards export and open market economy. In those 10 years more families began to move economically from the middle class to the middle upper class or upper class due to the investment that started (Wahdan 2012: 112). But there was also a widening in the gap between the rich and the poor, and income differentials increased. In terms of settlements and housing, these trends translated into an intensification of a housing problem. The real estate market became expensive and lots of people and young married couples could not find any affordable apartments to live in. By the 1990s gated residential compounds started to appear in the new cities such as 6<sup>th</sup> of October and 10<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan. Middle upper class families who can afford moving to the new cities, out of the boundaries of Cairo moved to villas in those compounds. At the same time the phenomena of building high rise building and 10 to 15 floors residential building in Cairo increased. Moreover the slums increased, due to more people moving into the city to have the services that are available only in the capital and in order to find jobs. So the production of richness paralleled the production of poverty. So we find *El-Heteya* that is a popular local poor neighborhood and more like a slum in the middle of *El Agouza* that is a middle upper class district located on the Western banks of the river Nile, and *Ezbet Wellad Allam* that is like a small poor village in the middle of *Dokki* that turned to be to middle class and middle upper class residential area.

This contrast between the buildings, the life style and the economic status happened not only on the residential scale in the residential districts; but also in office buildings and the complex buildings level. In the next chapter I will describe this contrast as I outline the skyline of the road I take to reach *Ramlet Bulaq*, heading to it from downtown.

The contrast I am talking about is not just in Cairo. In Delhi, the capital of India while walking in Connaught Place that is one of the main squares, you can find arcades of European architecture style that are full of shops of the international brands and there is the underground that looks like the German subway. If you walk for less than 10 minutes suddenly you will find numbers of families who are living on the side walk, and they put their wet clothes in the sun on the fence that surrounded the street trees, moreover their tents would be on the sidewalks and their children are begging everyone to give them money or food. And this contrast or the gap between things



and people that the theorists as I explained earlier in this chapter talked about is the effect of a neoliberalism political economy.

### 2.3. How urban changes happened in *Ramlet Bulaq* due to neoliberal politics:

*Ramlet Bulaq* was an agricultural land, a big and huge land and opened to the river Nile banks. I was not born yet at that time, but that is what my mother and my grandmother told me. Then came a man called *El-Ezawi* who built the first house on a spot of the land, then he began to rent other pieces that surrounded his house to some families who were coming from the same village he came from, and some of them were his relatives. Another man called *El-Kafrawi* partnered with him in the land. So the land was owned originally by *El-Kafrawi* and *El-Ezawi*. But bit by bit they built those workshops, factories and storages. (Khalil 2014).<sup>25</sup>

Can we thus consider what *O'm Fares* narrates above as the first stage of the developments that happened in *Ramlet Bulaq*?

The neoliberal programme draws its social power from the political and economic power of those whose interests it expresses: stockholders, financial operators, industrialists, conservative or social-democratic politicians who have been converted to the reassuring layoffs of *laisser-faire*, high-level financial officials eager to impose policies advocating their own extinction because, unlike the managers of firms, they run no risk of having eventually to pay the consequences. (Bourdieu 1998).

This quote by Pierre Bourdieu explains the question of what happened in *Ramlet Bulaq* and how neoliberalism worked in there. When early 1990s *Naguib Sawiras* who is a known businessman and *Gamal Mubarak* the son of removed president Hosni Mubarak stepped into the area, they choose the land of *Ramlet Bulaq* to be their location of investment. So they started buying the factories and the workshops then they privatized it and then demolished it. In 1996 they started the construction work of the currently known towers: the Nile City Towers. The process of the buildup took about 5 to 6 years where they hired lots of residents from *Ramlet Bulaq* as construction workers. Others who lost their jobs started to find jobs in *Souq El-A'asr* that is a nearby market.

Then *O'm Fares* followed:

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<sup>25</sup> Personal Interview with O'm Fares. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

I remember when *Sawiras* came to the area, he first bought the glass factory then he bought the wooden storage; followed with the thermal bricks storage. He bought the space that has the truck measurement weight scale; which is called Pascol. Then he got the cotton factory where I was working when I was a child and a teenager. Then he demolished the factories. Moreover he took all the streets that surrounded the factories and the workshops. (Khalil 2014).<sup>26</sup>

The last paragraph by the woman is to support the explanation of the neoliberal policy and the implementation of it in the last 20 years in *Ramlet Bulaq*. Also she refers to the dispossession and accumulation processes which happened in the area. The government and investors decided to take this piece of land in order to invest in it. The benefits returned to other people who are not from *Ramlet Bulaq*; for people who can afford staying in those fancy hotel and malls. The families were dispossessed from their spaces in order to serve another target for the investors. And the accumulation processes to the investor happened in building up the Nile City Towers and to receive whatever benefit and capital they are invested in. In which I second and assert what came in Harvey, James Scoot and James Ferguson analysis and was explained earlier.

Another scale of local development that I believe is related to the neoliberal and modernization agendas is a story by *A'm Gaber*; a man in *Ramlet Bulaq* who said:

When I was born, I was with my mother and my father in their house that was built from mud and wooden rafters. Then we moved to another area inside *Ramlet Bulaq* as well, and we built it out of mud and wood as well. In the 80s, exactly 1985 I decided to turn the house to a reinforced concrete one. It has more value and I can add floors for my children in future. So I called a contractor who came to build the house, he asked for 4000 Egyptian Pounds and I asked him to make the foundation to bear up to 15 floors. They started the work for one year, they finished the foundations and the ground floor where we are sitting now. Then they asked me for more money as the reinforced steel bars got higher prices in the market, so I refused and we had a fight; then I decided to complete it myself with another two workers. (Khalil 2014).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Personal Interview with O'm Fares. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

<sup>27</sup> Personal Interview with A'mGaber. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

His willingness to move from a mud house to another concrete one is what James Ferguson argues that the state imposed an image about what is good and what is bad in the urban communities; so people took the formal patterns of living and the forced concrete housing as the optimum and the developed things they should inhabit in the future and those things are the signs for them to upgrade from one class to another economically and socially (Ferguson 2007: 71).

The document of Cairo 2050 added high-rise towers and very high technological built construction in the place of *Ramlet Bulaq*. They did not write any specific quotes or configuration to the area but they highlighted it saying it will have rarefaction, investments and upgrading. *Ramlet Bulaq* area took the same code and description of *Bulaq Ed-Dakror* and *Omraneya* areas where I explained before will have the Khufu avenue project. I cannot guarantee any differentiations between *Ramlet Bulaq* and the other area; but I can see the similarities in implementing such projects and dealing with the accused informal sector with the same strategies.

There is a process in which we can relate capitalism to neoliberalism; neoliberalism that caused alienation and has so many contradictions as Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff mentioned in their paper “Alien-Nation: Zombies, Immigrants, and Millennial Capitalism”, they talked about the invisible hands that animated the political and material imperatives and the social forms to develop the regime of capitalism to neoliberalism and manifested it as a global system in the economic relations (Comaroff 2002:780). In other words; capitalism then neoliberalism then whatever system that imposes certain life styles on people’s lives will never ensure equal living conditions for the people. As long as the regime itself is imposing stratifications on peoples’ lives; whether we talk about housing, jobs, health and public services, in the process of classifying people and neighborhoods into poor and rich, the problem of exclusion, coercion and forms of structural violence will persist..

#### **2.4.Conclusion:**

In the chapter I explained how neoliberal policies affected *Ramlet Bulaq*; moreover how other plans may affect the whole urban and social life in the Great Cairo Region. My problem is with the development discourse that is used and its implications on people’s life.

Cairo 2050 project is not a project that will start; it already started in many different spots in Cairo as what happened in *Ramlet Bulaq*. The whole line of Cornish Street on Nile banks has changed in the last two decades and it will change more as

long as those policies remain antagonistic to the people who originally make the city and build it, a theme I will engage in the next chapter. There I will explain the urban composition of *Ramlet Bulaq* besides the social composition and I will explain more how they built the area and how it is divided into different sectors and groups.

### 3. Chapter Three

#### How to make the City

##### 3.1. Introduction:

I remember when my grandfather and my grandmother told me that the water of the river Nile was reaching the houses. Yes the water was flooding and reaches to the houses; and they were playing in it. Also they told about the making of the road on the river that called Cornish that is the main road on the riverbank. They came from Upper Egypt from *Assuit* but I have never been there. You know something, they said that people in *Ramlet Bulaq* were staying in tents, and then bit by bit they built houses. (Khalil 2014).<sup>28</sup>

This was a conversation between *O'm Fares* and me; she is in her late 50s in *Ramlet Bulaq*. She was describing stories from her memory about the area as my question was “Were you born in the area?” as her accent indicated her belonging to Upper Egypt not Cairo. So she told me that her grandparents came to Cairo from *Assuit* long ago and she was born in Cairo and specifically in *Ramlet Bulaq*. Her accent is a way of preserving their ethnic traditions; she was even wearing a long black dress *Galabeya* and she had a tattoo under her mouth proving that she has the culture of Upper Egypt.

In this chapter I raise the question of how the people make the city. That is related to how people are accessing the urban resources in order to make their built environment. The right to the city is about how people are freely accessing the urban resources in the city (Harvey 2008: 23). The urban resources are about the house or shelter, urban services like schools, hospitals, etc., streets, infrastructure and others. It is about all the elements that are making your environment. We can even consider that work is a right to the city; so most of the vendors are occupying the streets; in order to get a job and a source of living, are actually practicing their right to the city.

The phrase of making the city has different understandings; usually people consider that making the city is the responsibility of urban planners. Actually urban planning is in fact a “new science,” emerging in the last two hundred years. Urban planning science is about rules, regulations and measurements of how to make the city and how to design it. The relation between urban planning and structuralism is highly important. As there is a structure assumed for people’s life style and ways of

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<sup>28</sup> Personal Interview with O'm Fares. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

living. In other words, structuralism assumed a certain model of how people should live i.e. the width of the street should be something and the height of the building should be something else, proportional with the street width. But actually all of these measurements should not be the rule that we follow. I mean that there were billions of people who lived their lives and will live in this world without being or existing in any of these modules and measurements. For example, sidewalks are important in the urban planning, but does it mean that anyone who does not use the sidewalk will die or be punished? Paul Rabinow in his book *French Modern* talked about the emerging of those new modules in the urban planning; he said that the problem of planning that it needed to create certain demographic and industrial elements in the territory allow the state to control everything as the housing and the urbanization processes would be according to laws; the state controlling and regulating the welfare population is related to the modern understanding of society (Rabinow 1989:3&10). Rabinow elaborated that in the nineteenth century in France there was a successful model of combining art and science to develop and clean-up the city according to the modernist principals. Echochard was assigned to create a housing unit that is perfect for human beings; this unit met great failure as he did not take any social or economic considerations into account; moreover he refused to acknowledge the local practices and the historical aspects in that unit (Ibid: 4). But France kept assigning other architects and urban planners the mission of creating other social housing units for the working man to fit into; as there was a complete rejection of the organic unplanned spaces the regime considered inefficient, unhealthy and not-controllable. State agents believed that the control of society begins with the housing unit and the urbanization process of the city and its surrounding, so the state's power related to the construction process through an arsenal of laws (Ibid: 6). Rabinow elaborates his understanding of modernity relating it to Foucault's understating of modernity as relations of power transmitted into discursive and nondiscursive practices (Ibid: 8).

These measurements and assumptions of the urban planning science provide a certain image about how the city should look like, and the ways in which development is related to the urbanization. So for a citizen who is from the city means that he or she is more civilized and more educated. As Arif Dirlik argues a certain epistemological Eurocentric view prevails in which the Third World is always trying to catch up and fit in with global modernity (Dirlik 2004:146). The linear assumption

embodied in this view produced hegemonic visions of everything social, not just the urban planning and the city.

Regarding the issue about the slums or the so-called informal settlements or the squatters, those areas do not look like the designed districts. Even the name of “informal settlements” is coming from the binary opposition of formal and informal that the formal areas are the ones that were designed by architects and urban planners and into the plans of the state apparatus, and the informal are the ones out of the state apparatus and the government did not plan to do it and the people “informally” built it.

My argument here is about the models and classifications that have been produced in citizens’ minds and reinforced by public discourses, practices and policies. The model of the older you get, the more you should have a flat, marry and have children and that is in order to be a good citizen in society. This flat should be in the city, somewhere in a decent district and here I am talking about any example of the middle class strata in Egypt. The model continued to produce a certain image about the life style we should have in our lives, a certain image about having a car and or having certain number of children. Same model produced the idea about the so-called informal settlement that it causes chaos in the city and it is not planned and it has tons of rubbish, diseases and inappropriate behavior from its residents. What would support my argument here is Charles Taylor’s “Modern Social Imaginary”, where he argues that the problem of modern social science is modernity, as modernity constituted a way of life related to the nature of institutional forms and new practices in industry and production; moreover modernity asserts a new way of living as individualization and secularization (Taylor 2002: 91). His hypothesis is about a new conception of moral society and how the society and people get their images in styles of lives in their head and they naturalize their perceptions, and how the state and the media are responsible in a way in constituting these social imagination (Ibid: 92). He analyzes how the moral order was produced in the societies whether in peasant communities and in the others working communities as well; the moral order in which the people believed related also to religion and people’s ideas about God and whoever is the messenger and they imagined the society to be the same; there is always some kind of hierarchy and they related it to the social order that should be there and the different tasks each one of us has, it is all about imagining and reconfiguring the cosmos and how it does work. (Ibid: 94-95). Then Taylor makes an important shift in

analysis of understanding the social imaginary and relates it to the economy, seeing the society and understanding it as an economy, “an interlocking set of activities of production, exchange, and consumption, which form a system with its own laws and dynamics” (Ibid: 105). So people relate their existence and they coexist with ideas because of believing of the interrelation of the system of economy that manages the relationships in society. In addition to the economic collaboration and the exchange relationships in which they think it is central to the constitution of society and the making of social life (Ibid: 105). This social imaginary is taken as normal and the standard for people to imagine their social surroundings and then to legitimize their practices (Ibid: 106). There are two levels of understandings Charles Taylor proposed, one is about the macro level and how people constitute their relationships to the system and the cosmos. Another micro level in the social imaginary is about legitimizing their relationship and understanding with the social surrounding that are the everyday relations. Even how a person on both levels the macro and the micro legitimizes their desires and practices as the norms and standards according to which one behaves and understands their relations to the surrounding.

Asef Bayat and Denis Eric asked in their paper “Who is afraid of *Ashwaiyyat*? Urban change and politics in Egypt”:

But what is a “normal” city? It is viewed primarily as a “modern” entity, that is, one in which the buildings, streets, means of communication and people (their behaviour, clothes, jobs and lifestyles) are somehow similar to those of the élites. Thus, those neighbourhoods where buildings have no permits, where streets have no formal names, where men wear the traditional *galabia*, where women sit and socialize in front of their homes in the alleyways and where adults are largely active in the informal economy are considered as “non-modern” and thus “abnormal”. (Bayat and Eric 2000: 197).

Also what Dalia Wahdan argued regarding the development and the discourse about the new communities and the suburb in Egypt as imagined civilized communities that would fit in the modernity’s required shape. In her chapter “Transport Thugs:

That the Egyptian government since 1991 exposed in its daily newspapers the proceedings of the development process of communities and how should the government should adopt such processes in having new developed communities in the desert. Moreover how they are selecting investors from different fields of



work to work on urbanizing and developing the desert. (Wadhan 2012: 114).

Hickel in his article about neoliberalism model and its unfolding in South Africa added:

The figure of the married male breadwinner living in a formal township house and working a stable job in manufacturing, mining, or the civil service (see Hickel 2012). This figure was central to South Africans' expectations of modernity in the second half of the twentieth century, but rapidly crumbled as new strategies of capital accumulation undermined the conditions for such aspirations and cast most South Africans into a state of abjection (cf. Ferguson 1999). (Hickel 2014: 106,107).

Hickel argued how the government is creating the category of slums as dirty, diseased and dangerous in order for slums' communities not to fit into the category of the traditional image of a citizen and or the modern city or the image of modernity (Hickel 2014: 118).

How is this translated into the details of daily life? It happened to me several times to ask the taxi driver where he is from and the answer usually is: "*beg your pardon, I am from Dar As-Salam or Manshiet Nasser*". *Manshiet Nasser* and *Dar As-Salam* are considered as popular and slum areas dwellings. The problem is in his saying "beg your pardon", why he is asking for an excuse for telling the name of his neighborhood. Why he feels ashamed of saying the name of the area. The problem is the image produced about the slums, as dirty, with lots of thugs and criminals, their residents are people who are not educated and illiterate and they may attack you anytime for any reason. What the taxi driver said is supported by Asef Bayat and Eric Denis's article *Who is afraid of Ashwaiyyat? Urban Change and Politics in Egypt*; where they argue that informal areas to be "representing a Hobbesian locus of lawlessness and extremism, producing a "culture of violence" and an "abnormal" way of life. (Bayat 2000: 185).

In this chapter, I unpack the urban composition of *Ramlet Bulaq*. With the urban composition I mean the urban fabric; how was it? And how did it develop from time to time responding to the changes that happened not just in *Bulaq* but also in Cairo? Moreover the changes happened in the political agenda that affect the urban planning.

In addition to the natural changes that happened in the River Nile and the land that consequently changed *Bulaq's* shape and its relation to the riverbanks and water.

In *Ramlet Bulaq*, the social composition is not less important than the urban composition. As the families have social networks; or at least they knew each other in consequence to the urban fabric that is compacted and narrowed, the area is small and no one enters the place unless he/she is a resident or wants someone from there. So no one passes in the area to access another point; everyone knows the other and who is there and why. Understanding this social composition is important in understanding how people make their space.

People in *Ramlet Bulaq* are originally from different places in Upper Egypt. And this influences how they live and the culture in which they are transmitted from their places to the city of Cairo. They are migrants from one spot to another in order to find work. They do integrate with the city but on their own terms. Maybe they keep their language and their habits but sometimes they change their customs and/or their way in talking or even accept habits that are related to the city i.e. their women and daughters work in different positions. Moreover in their everyday details; they get used to use the city life style in matter of transportation, crowd, cinemas and other things that maybe were not there in their village in Upper Egypt.

My aim here is not trying to find how they transmitted their culture and/or how they came to Cairo and lived in *Ramlet Bulaq*. As I am looking for more contemporary issues in *Ramlet Bulaq* and the residents who originally built *Ramlet Bulaq* are not there anymore; they died. What I want to talk about in this chapter relates to the composition of *Ramlet Bulaq*, its urban composition and its social composition. Moreover I am looking to the social networks, the different relations and the urban fabric composition so I will even use maps to explain the different areas and families' location in the area. And how they make the place in terms in its current look and composition.

### **3.2. The Urban composition of *Ramlet Bulaq*:**

#### **Old Memory:**

There are significant stages in *Bulaq* and *Ramlet Bulaq* urban changes that I will explain here. Some of the stages I will explain are coming from the maps I found and others are from the memory of the residents and those are more important as they have a mark and a memory in the contemporary residents. The current composition is

important in terms of understanding the different strata and other people who are inhabitants of the area.

*Bulaq* area was formed in consequence of the eastern shifts of the River Nile since 1281 to 1403. *Al-Nasser Mohamed Ibn Qualwu'n* was the first to encourage urbanization processes in the area by building mosques, palaces, houses and gardens for the elites to enjoy the quiet view of river Nile away from the crowded downtown.

Along in the Mamluk and Ottman eras in Egypt, i.e. in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, the port of *Bulaq* was the most important port in Egypt. They used it for imports and exports. Moreover all the soldiers groups were travelling to fight from that port, and Egyptians used to celebrate them in front of *Bulaq* port.

Mostly *Bulaq* until 1800 was kept as it is, as the recorded maps from the French expedition mapped and surveyed the area as gardens, palaces and houses. And the residents of *Bulaq* have a famous story fighting the French army as they consider it an occupation. Consequently because of the massive fights that happened in the area, the whole district of *Bulaq* burnt and the place turned to be empty of anything. Then it was renewed and the port of *Bulaq* was back to work in the *Mohamed Ali* era.

By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the museum of *Bulaq* was built and it consisted mostly of the important Pharonic monuments and status. Then it was moved to the current Egyptian Museum that is located in Tahrir Square in 1902. In the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Abbas Helmy* the second built and opened *Imbaba* Bridge in 1892, then the structure of the original bridge was moved to Damietta in 1927, and they replaced it with another structure<sup>29</sup>.

### **Recent Memory:**

Going to *Ramlet Bulaq* that is in *Bulaq Abu El Ella*, originally the district is historical and started to urbanize in 1400 then in 1800. And because *Ramlet Bulaq* is part of Cairo and part of its urban composition is related to the surroundings physical environment; I will start to describe the road in which takes me to *Ramlet Bulaq*, I take Cornish El Nile street from Downtown, which means I approach *Ramlet Bulaq* from the south. On my way, I pass different buildings and life forms. I start with the Egyptian Museum then *Ramsis Hilton Hotel* that is a big building in brownish color with lots of balconies that is for the rooms. Then I pass *Maspero* building that is the official media and television governmental building. After those big high rise

<sup>29</sup> <http://caiobserver.com/post/12492028959/old-imbaba-bridge-1890#.Ut6KzmQ1g4M>

buildings I pass number of workshops and small shops that are all one floor or ground floor, then I suddenly find the high rise building with lots of security and surveillance where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is located, in less than a minute a series of cloth with multi colors appear which means I started with the front of *Wekalet El Balah*. Tons of blouses, shirts, jackets and pants are everywhere in different colors and sizes. Again another visual contrast happens that after all of these sellers, I find again fancy high rise towers, it is The World Trade center that are two high rise buildings with fancy entrances to its hotel that then a governmental building that is *Dar EL-Kotob* where all the manuscripts and the official archives are kept. Again, a couple of other fancy towers; one of them is under construction called *Al-Deyar Al-Quatareya*; that will be a complex of malls, hotel, cinemas and offices. Finally the monsters of high-rise two towers appear and a podium in between connecting them that is The Nile City Towers and at this point I leave the vehicle I am riding whether it is a microbus or a taxi (Figure 7). I begin walking in a narrow street beside the towers, on my right there is a side gate to the towers that has mobile shop and one of the banks' branches, and people are maybe coming in or out, upper middle class well-dressed people. And on the gates there is a number of security men who have well-built bodies, are dressed in a certain uniform that makes them look like the army. On the left side there is a big grey wall, and number of kiosks that sell cigarettes, sandwiches, candies, etc. A huge parking lot appears on the left side that has the towers employees' cars. In front of me appears *Ramlet Bulaq*; first I see a number of repair cars' workshops and a white wall with a 3 meters wide entrance that is the entrance of *Ramlet Bulaq*. From a distance behind the walls, I can see on the left one a big house that looks old and has different architectural ornaments. And on the right stories of red brick houses appear, and some of them are cracked. Once I cross the 3 meters wide entrance that means I am inside *Ramlet Bulaq*.



Figure 7: A shot to Cornish Street.<sup>30</sup>

In *Gamal Abdel Nasser* era, he decided to form the railways and he made the bridge and built the storages for the railways in the back of *Ramlet Bulaq*. Moreover he decided to build those housing units in order to shelter the families who were in here without appropriate housings. (Khalil 2014).<sup>31</sup>

*A'm Gaber* who is a man in his 60s told me about the form of the area. Also he mentioned that a man came and occupied that land early 1900 and built himself a big house that is still there in the entrance of *Ramlet Bulaq*. That man began to rent other people from his village pieces of lands and he let them build rooms for themselves and their families. Many others residents in *Ramlet Bulaq* asserted the same story and it seems that that was the way in which *Ramlet Bulaq* was urbanized with its current houses and buildings.

My mother told me about how the residents were living in tents, yes tents beside each other. Then they started to build mud houses. They were getting the mud from the river Nile then they make bricks in workshops in front of *Ramlet Bulaq*, then they get the bricks and build the houses. They were building the houses themselves; that my mother and my grandmother told me. Everyone who occupied a piece of land turned this piece of land that had a tent into a house composed of two to three rooms with kitchen and bathrooms. All of those things I heard

<sup>30</sup> Figure 7: A shot to Cornish Street by the author. March 2014.

<sup>31</sup> Personal Interview with A'mGaber. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

from my mother and my grandmother, when I was born, the houses were already there. (Khalil 2014).<sup>32</sup>

Parallel to this urbanization process, and I am using urbanization in terms of converting the green land to house and buildings, a number of workshops and factories were built and hundreds of people from *Ramlet Bulaq* were working in those places, genders, men and women used to work in. The workshops were for metal works and a glass factory that was producing cubs, glasses and jars. For more than 50 years the conditions of the area and the life of the residents were stable in a way that people are living in their houses and working in the factory and the workshops in the nearby areas. Or at least that is how they produce at present the pasts of *Ramlet Bulaq*.

As I explained before early in the 1990s *Naguib Sawiras* who is a known businessman and *Gamal Mubarak* the son of the removed president *Mohamed Hosni Mubarak* stepped into the area and they choose the land of *Ramlet Bulaq* to be their place of investment. They started buying the factory and the workshops then they privatized them and then demolished them. In 1996 they started the construction works of the current known towers: the Nile City Towers. The process of the buildup took about 5 to 6 years where they hired lots of residents from *Ramlet Bulaq* as construction workers. Others who lost their jobs started to find jobs in *Souq El-A'asr* that is a nearby market.

*O'm Fares* followed:

I remember when *Sawiras* came to the area, he first bought the glass factory then he bought the wooden storage. Followed with the thermal bricks storage, and then the space that has the truck measurement weight scale; which is called *Pascol*. Then he bought the cotton factory where I was working when I was a child and a teenager. Then he demolished the factories. Moreover he took all the streets surrounded the factories and the workshops. (Khalil 2014).<sup>33</sup>

In the current urban fabric in *Ramlet Bulaq* we will find that the heart and the south of the buildings are somehow “good houses.” While in the North and beside and under the bridge of the railways, the houses are more rooms, slums and temporary

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<sup>32</sup> Personal Interview with *O'm Fares*. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

<sup>33</sup> Personal Interview with *O'm Fares*. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

structures, the entrance to this area that is called *El-Seka El-Hadeed*. It is narrow and does not have an access from the street, I have to get inside *Ramlet Bulaq* first and then from alley to another one, to reach this area. Actually several times in the beginning I was visiting the area and I never entered this area. It is marginalized as they are poorer and I will explain more in the social composition about their social status. The streets in *Ramlet Bulaq* are compacted fabric, while walking in the alleys; you have to say hello to everyone. It is similar to village pattern or near to all the popular known areas (Figure 8).

There is something different in *Ramlet Bulaq*; it is not only that everyone knows each other, even not about the compact urban fabric. It is about the fence that is surrounding *Ramlet Bulaq*. The neighborhood has an entrance from the Nile side and another one from the West. The area was segregated because of the Towers. According to my interviews, some of them mentioned that in early 2000s after the opening of the towers, they had to enter and exit their area through one entrance, which is not the main entrance that connects them to Nile Cornish. As *Fares* said:

We had to use the West entrance for days, and the policemen and the security of the Nile City Towers prevented us from getting outside the area via the eastern entrance that is the main entrance and where we can find the transportation to go to our work places. (Khalil 2014).<sup>34</sup>



Figure 8<sup>35</sup>: A shot to Ramlet Bulaq from the Nile City Tower.

<sup>34</sup> Personal Interview with Fares. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

<sup>35</sup> Figure 8: A shot to Ramlet Bulaq from the Nile City Tower. By: Nicholas Simcik- Arese

### 3.3. The Social composition of *Ramlet Bulaq*:

*O'm Fares* started by saying:

The entire land of *Ramlet Bulaq* is owned by the husband of my mother's cousin, his name is *Ahmed El-Kafrawy*, my aunt to my mother's side built a house in *Rod El-Farag* and her children are still there. There are lots of people who are from our family, *Gaber* married from our family, as the cousin of his wife is married to my cousin. *Arafa Awatef* and the cousin of *O'm Anwar* married my sister's daughter. All the middle area of *Ramlet Bulaq* is belonging to *El-Kafraweya* family. Most of those houses belong to the cousin of my mother, she called *Ateyat* as her husband is from *El-Kafraweya* family as well. We are proud to be from *El-Kafraweya* family, even my mother named three of my sisters after the names of her sisters who are my aunts; *Negma*, *Rae'ssa* and *Ihsan*. *Rae'ssa* my aunt was a very important person here in *Ramlet Bulaq*, everyone respected her. All my sisters are living here. My husband's father is from *El-Kafraweya* but his mother is from Upper Egypt from *Ikhmim*. (Khalil 2014).<sup>36</sup>

The social composition is related to the urban composition in a way. As certain families are staying in certain parts of *Ramlet Bulaq*. They divided themselves to three segments that are *El-Kafraweya* as the old women explained before, *El-Ezaweya* and *El-Seka El-Hadeed*. I will discuss the social composition in relation to different factors that are gender, age, work, class and family.

From the early visits I had in *Ramlet Bulaq*; I observed that there is a "demographic balance" in their social composition. In other words, I found that the number of women and men are almost equal. Moreover different age groups are there. Their classes vary between middle low and low class economically.

What gave me close observations to the social composition was that the Cairo governor asked them for a meeting and the municipality decided to survey and count the families in the area in order to know how many flats are required to resettle the families after the evacuation process. The families asked me to observe and rewrite whatever counting the employees will have in their survey. So with the cooperation of other friends we followed the committee from the government; they were 3 men, so for 5 to 6 days we were surveying the area with them, counting the families and the rooms, flats and houses they were living in.

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<sup>36</sup> Personal Interview with *O'm Fares*. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.



One of the important factors in the social composition in *Ramlet Bulaq* is that most of people are relatives and have some kind of social networks and relationships. As I stated before they are divided into three urban areas, *El-Kafraweya* who originally come from the family of *El-Kafrawy* who owns part of the land, they even have the heart of *Ramlet Bulaq* that is the middle area that is considered privileged in a way. Second is *El-Ezzaweya* related to *El-Ezzawy* who owns the other half of the land with *El-Kafrawy*. *El-Ezzaweya* are families who are privileged as well and live in the south area of *Ramlet Bulaq*. The most marginalized families in *Ramlet Bulaq* are those who are living beside the railways, *El Seka El-Hadeed*. Families there are very poor and they pay monthly rent to a woman living in *Ramlet Bulaq* who is one of *El-Kafraweya* and who inherited this piece of land. They are marginalized socially as everyone deals with them as if they are criminals as they occupy the land beside the railways lines and under the bridge of the railways.

Regarding work, you rarely find in *Ramlet Bulaq* an employee in the government. Most of the men are working in crafts and daily basis work to get their income. Some of them are workers in *Souq El-A'asr* in different handwork crafts and light industries. Some others have been working at the Nile City Towers for years and they were fired after the clashes of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012. Women are varied in different positions; some young women are working in cleaning roles in the Nile City Towers. Others are housewives. And a number of the women are cooking in their houses for the other families in *Ramlet Bulaq* or they sell candies, tea, sugar and other goods on a small corner that they created in the front of their houses or inside their flats in the ground floors and they sell from their windows.

### **3.4. The right to the city and the right of making the neighborhood of *Ramlet Bulaq***

We get used to asking who decided to build this place or that city or made this project in order to have a clear sequence of the building process. In one of the interviews in *Ramlet Bulaq*, *A'm Gaber* said:

There was a man called *El-Kafrawy* who wanted to occupy this piece of land, so he built a big house in the area, then he started to rent other pieces of lands to other people who are coming from upper Egypt, and

who may and may not be his relatives, or friends of friends and that is how *Ramlet Bulaq* was built. (Khalil 2014).<sup>37</sup>

I am concerned here with the recent and contemporary ways of making the space in which the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* live and work. In August 2012 and after the clashes of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012, the residents discovered that the Cairo government, informal settlement development fund and the ministerial cabinet released a decision to take the land of *Ramlet Bulaq* without any clear reasons. The residents decided to sue the three institutions and they provided lots of documents to prove their ownership to the land and to appeal against the decision. The legal consultants and lawyers were from two non-governmental organizations that are Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights and the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights. This was the residents' first steps in resistance to make their place exist and not to move from the area. After several months, in the beginning of 2013 and with the cooperation of one of the charity associations that is working in *Ramlet Bulaq*, the association decided to help the families to provide all the houses with water pipes. The residents collected an amount of money from each house and they bought two electric pump motors to rise the pushing of the water and the association that is called "*Nehlam b Bukra*" "We dream for tomorrow" provided the water infrastructure pipes.

The kind of resistance and the making of the place I mentioned above is on the collective level, but all the time there is the individual level that is happening in the area. For example a family decides to paint their house after the revolution of January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 so the front of the house looks like the Egyptian flag. Others wrote on their houses January 25<sup>th</sup>. From time to time, you find someone who painted the house from inside or outside, others who renew their houses from inside or get new furniture. All of these things prove how positive their relation to the space is, and how they have the ownership feeling of the place which is expressed all the time in their routine practices of living, renewing and restructuring their place and themselves in the process.

On another collective level, I observed many times I visited the area, a group of women who are always sitting in one of the public spaces in *Ramlet Bulaq*, one of them is selling homemade food, another is sitting in front of her small shop that sells

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<sup>37</sup> Personal Interview with A'mGaber. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

candies, tea, sugar and other stuff and another woman who is a very old woman who is always sitting in the sun in front of her house. All the time this space is clean, they are making it their space on a daily level. And in occasions like Ramadan or feasts the children prepare their colors paper work to decorate the space and make it warmer to have fun and play in it.

One of the most precious rights as David Harvey describe it in his article “Right to The City”, the people are liberating their spaces and what the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* are doing is exactly how Harvey described it: the freedom to make and remake the city (Harvey 2008: 23). And actually we can see it comes on both individual and collective levels, which make it more powerful and meaningful. The right to the city is about the making and remaking of urban resources (Harvey 2008: 23) and the residents in *Ramlet Bulaq* are not only building their houses, but also they build the roads and decide which routes should be wider than others. It is expressed in how they made open spaces for their meetings and gatherings in front of their houses, and in the water and sewage networks manually constructed in the area.

### **3.5.Conclusion:**

In this chapter I explained the urban composition of *Ramlet Bulaq* as well as its social composition. It is important to understand both as mutually constitute and laying the “background” for the unfolding of the everyday of the residents *Ramlet Bulaq*. My argument in chapter three related to how people are making their places and they invent lots of ways to build and create their own neighborhoods. I engaged how they do provide themselves with all kinds of services they need; in addition to services that will be useful for others who live in the surroundings. I do not want to romanticize their status and I am not trying to say here that the so-called informal settlements are the required pattern to build the places and/or neighborhoods. As all of the benefits we can see in the so-called slums; we can see the problems they face in earthquakes, floods and any other natural catastrophe. Moreover there are the diseases they have because of the infrastructure and the dirty water they use; in addition to their living in unhealthy apartments where there is no sun, which caused them different diseases. My argument here is not about romanticizing how people do make their places but I am trying to look at the urban and social phenomena from another point of view. I think we need to look from a different perspective where

we can observe people's practices, not from the theories and books, and not from the right and the wrong perspectives.

## 4. Chapter Four

### The Structural Violence and Tactics for Being in *Ramlet Bulaq*

#### 4.1. Introduction:

Since the 1990s in *Ramlet Bulaq*, we can see a structural and systematic process of evacuation of the social, economic, and physical being of the residents. As I mentioned before, for the purposes of this thesis, we can temporally begin the story with the process of privatization of the glass factories and the cotton mills, followed by demolishing them, and then crystallized in the building of the Nile City Towers. For years after the construction of the towers; between 2000 and 2012, a process of selling and buying the houses was taking place. It was a seemingly peaceful process of people from the administration of the Nile City Towers who convinced the house residents to sell their homes and then to leave the area to another one. This process was not only about moving out, or demolishing factories and constructing the towers. Equally significant, it was a process of reworking the socio-economic landscape of the lives of *Ramlet Bulaq* residents that was premised on destroying the social fabric of being in the area.

#### 4.2. The Towers:

Another story that is significant and related to what I am trying to elaborate here is demonstrated in the following: Zizek argues, “In Kierkegaard’s terms, a revolutionary process is not a gradual progress but a repetitive movement, a movement of repeating the beginning, again and again.” (Zizek 2009: 45). Different groups in *Ramlet Bulaq* practiced those repetitive movements and struggles in their space. One example evolves around *Nessma*, who in 2009 started to fight with the Nile City Towers administration and the municipalities regarding her kiosk that was her source of living. *Nessma*’s kiosk and other kiosks were located in the front of *Ramlet Bulaq* and in the back yard of the factories and workshops. The land plot shows that the Nile City Towers building took additional 6 meters from the street that is between it and *Ramlet Bulaq*. As the municipality decided to demolish *Nessma*’s kiosk accusing her that she is the one who took those 6 meters of the street, she sued them in the court arguing that her kiosk was built much earlier than the towers who by force took part of the street. While the case was in court, *Nessma* refused all kinds of

negotiations. A car accident happened and she died (Khalil, 2013)<sup>38</sup>, they never know who did it, but everyone in the area asserted that it is related to her revolutionary spirit and her act preventively. I second Zizek's argument where it is stated: "In a way, we are excluded, from nature as well as from our symbolic substance. Today, we are all potentially homo sacer, and the only way to avoid actually becoming so is to act preventively." (Zizek 2009: 55). According to Zizek, homo sacer are people who decide to act against, and fight, the systems or the reality to change it. *Nessma* was not the only homo sacer in *Ramlet Bulaq* and along the thesis we will hear stories about people who decided to fight for their existence whether with the administration of the Nile City Towers, the government, the municipalities or even with others who came to the area to exploit the people, like the candidates who were in the people's assembly elections before and after the January 25<sup>th</sup> 2011 revolution. There are others in *Ramlet Bulaq* who never engaged in the issues of struggle in their area; but they participated in so many different events in the revolution and they were arrested with the revolutionaries and they are proud of it all the time. Some people decide to be homo sacer but they act differently and assume different positions.

Everyone is claiming that *Nessma* was killed out of her resistance. It was never proven; but years later she won the case and the other neighboring kiosks benefited from her resistance. *Nessma* and others made the space suitable for their needs and their tactics for being in the area meant having these kiosks in order to make their living. The beginning of the Nile City Towers construction made conflicts for the residents and *Nessma's* story is one of them. But *Nessma's* story remained as a start of violent tactics against the residents; as indirect consequences of the story, the residents keep reminding themselves that whoever will fight against the Nile City Towers would be killed or harmed in any way. The story of *Nessma* may not relate directly to violence and or physical attacks or fights but it remains in the systematic struggles which happened in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

*Nessma's* story was significant in the residents' memory; it takes different notions of class; gender and violence, all interrelated with complex dynamics of power forms. Mostly it influences their new battle with the administration of the Nile City Towers; and Butalia words here are expressing what I want to say:

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<sup>38</sup> Personal Interview in Ramlet Bulaq. April 2013.

Experience is mediated through historical understanding, and memory is subject to selection and mediation. People choose to remember certain things depending on who they are, how they are placed, and their class. Their economic and political circumstances, their gender and indeed their perception of the interviewer who might act as a catalyst for such memories. (Butalia 1994: 180).

In 2012, a sequence of different fires erupted in different houses inside *Ramlet Bulaq*. And because the houses are small and attached to each other; it was easy for the fire to spread quickly. Each time a fire happened, the residents asked the Nile City Towers to provide them with their water pump to extinguish it. The last fire happened in July 2012, at the same time the Nile City Towers changed the Head of their Security Management. So when the fire started and the residents ran to ask the Towers to provide them with water, the administration said that the person who has the keys is not there. That caused the demolition of 4 houses and the death of a 4 years-old child in the fire. The child name was *Ahmed* and I mentioned him early in chapter one in the first paragraph when the girl claimed that *Amr* was not a criminal and he was upset because of *Ahmed's* death. Again here we see the social networking and how it works and influences the residents' moves and decisions.

Regarding the fire, we can see a sequence of structural violence that happened against the families. They struggled in so many things; but in their direct relation to the Nile City Towers Administration, there was a kind of a structural violence that happened. As we can see observe a relation of neighboring formed between the residents and the Administration as they helped each other in different occasions and the residents dealt with the Towers as the place they are working in and from where they make their living and this will be more understandable in the next story, as in the Friday of Anger, that was on January 28<sup>th</sup> 2011, the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* decided to protect the Towers from the strangers and intruders after the policemen disappeared from the streets, which proves this relation of neighboring and that the residents knew that their life is attached and related to the Towers. I am not sure if the neighboring relation was a choice or a must; I can consider it as part of the tactics for being for the residents, and they did not have any other choice to survive beside the capital of the Nile City Towers. It was easier to pretend the existence of this relationship to save their lives and to get whatever benefit they can get from them; as I mentioned before that after the killing of *Nessma*; the Nile City Towers sent them the hidden message that it is better to be good and not to fight.

So the relation to the Towers formed structural violence began with the process to build the Towers itself, as privatization, demolishing and building the Towers forced people to leave their jobs and for sure some of them stayed months without any word. Then even if we name the neighboring relation as adopting form the residents side to the existence of the Towers and they dealt with it as a fact and part of their life; so the power of the administration was the one to draw this neighboring relation; as when they decide to stop giving them water; the fire got bigger and a child died. As long as the power dominated in the hands of the administration of the Nile City Towers; the structural violence processes were there and still there.

#### **4.3.The Land:**

During the days of the revolution, that day when the police disappeared from the street, the Friday of Anger that was on January 28h, 2011. We were in our houses and we saw different groups of *thieves* passing by the main street “Cornish” and they looted Arcadia mall that is located about 150 meters from here. We the families, young men and women decided to protect our neighborhood and the Nile City Towers, as we were afraid of being accused of thieving anything. Moreover, some of us already work in the Nile City Towers. We gathered ourselves and divided into different groups and stayed all the night in front of the Nile City Towers, we observed the road and we refused the entrance of any unknown people. And that time we already heard that there are thieves everywhere because of the absence of the policemen. We also prevented some of the thieves who came to steal things from the mall of the Nile City Towers. After two to three days, OnTV channel that belongs to *Naguib Sawiras* who owns part of the Towers announced a thank you note to us. They said thanks to the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* who protected the Nile City Towers on the Friday of Anger. During the same week, the Head Manager of Security called some of us and they asked us to work for them as security men and some other women got other jobs in the Towers. Since that day we are getting very good salaries from the Towers. The salaries varied between at least 1500 Egyptian pounds up to 3500 and 4000 Egyptian pounds. This amount of money is huge for any of us for sure; it is double the amount that we could make from our jobs in different fields. The Manager of Security asked us to leave our jobs to be free at all times for the guarding mission we have. So we left our jobs; on the one hand he asked us to, I mean to have a fulltime commitment to the Towers, and on the other hand we already got more money from this job than of any other jobs we had. (Khalil,2014).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Personal Interview with Fares. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.



This was a story by *Fares*; one of the youth in *Ramlet Bulaq*, who already has a unique job as a driver of construction truck in one of the biggest companies in Egypt. I was trying to understand the power dynamics and the relationships between the residents and the administration of The Nile City Tower after the accident. *Fares* added:

In the morning of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012; *Amr El-Boni* who was a young man living here with us in *Ramlet Bulaq* and one of the young men who was working as a security guard since January 2011 as all of us. It happened that in July 2012 after 18 months we were getting our salaries by the 26<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup> of each month. That month of June 2012 the salaries were late to the last day of the month. Then the salaries of July were late, August began. That is why on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 *Amr* went to the Nile City Towers Administration asking to meet the Head Manager of security to understand why the salaries were late. The Head Manager of Security was replaced by another new one. The new hired person was very aggressive with us and before that day he asked some of us to leave their jobs as they do not do anything. *Amr* negotiated with the Police of Tourism to go up and meet the Manager, but they refused and the police man threatened to shoot him. (Khalil, 2014).<sup>40</sup>

The police tourism officer is part of the security of the Nile City Towers; as there is an agreement in the Egyptian government that any place that foreigners visit should have tourist police officers. *Fares* followed:

And in the minute *Amr* decided to leave and he turned around to leave, the police man shot him in his back, and *Amr* fell down dead. We heard the shots and we ran to see what is going on. *Amr's* uncle was one of the first to reach there, he is an old man. He entered the Towers to find *Amr* lying down in his blood. He carried him trying to rescue him. So the police man shot him in his leg as well. All the youth gathered and they began a fight with the security and the police in front of the towers. Central security and police men surrounded the place. A fire caught a number of cars that were parked in front of the Towers. For more than 4 to 5 hours the fight continued. The policemen shot a number of us and we just had stones that we threw at the soldiers. In the same night and the following nights they arrested about 52 young men, some of them injured with bullets and with severe wounds in their bodies. (Khalil, 2014).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Personal Interview with *Fares*. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

*Fares* is one of the rare people who mentioned details that others never talked about. Like their responsibility of accepting the offered jobs as security men and they are not security men from the beginning, and the fact that they are responsible of stopping the practice of their original jobs that they used to hold before the revolution. *Fares* was speaking about the responsibility of everyone and he did not try to victimize the residents' position. Although he was trying to be honest. I analyzed the story from the perspective of structural violence, as the Administration of the Nile City Towers asked them to leave their jobs; in which means no one thought about the future and they thought that this situation would be like this forever. The idea of working in the Towers formed new social networks; as anyone who worked in the Towers had solidarity with others who are working with him or her. In another way, it created a hate relationship in the social networks for people who did not work for the Towers; whether they choose not to work with them as they always considering them the enemy and never felt secured towards the Administration and others who did not have the ability to work as security guards, cleaners and so on.

Supposedly that everyone in *Ramlet Bulaq* knew that the Nile City Towers Administration are willing to buy the houses in order to extend their project to the back area of the Towers, that is why just after the killing of *Amr El-Boni*; many of them claimed that the whole accident was mainly to evacuate them to make benefit from the land. But since the Towers were built, the negotiation with them to sell their houses were all with the Nile City Towers Administration, which is why it was a surprise for them to discover that announcement to evacuate the land from the government's side.

That announcement discovered after the accident of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012, and it was published in the official newspaper on June 2012. The announcement started with mentioning number of laws regarding the regulations of taking lands for public benefits and another law that give the prime minister the right to take any land anytime as he believes that the government needs it. Then it announced in the cooperation between the prime minister cabinet, the Informal Settlement Development Fund and the Cairo governor that the three are taking the slums of the Nile City Towers (that is *Ramlet Bulaq*). Finally they asked the responsible of implementing the evacuating to start right away. The announcement does not talk about the families or where they should go. Actually the whole page with laws and

official language format does not speak about people or residents at all and they did not even mention one single reason to do so.

As the government before released that decision of taking the land of *Ramlet Bulaq*; they decide to make a project in *Ramlet Bulaq*. As in March 2013 the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* and other organizations who are already involved in the area discovered an announcement of a development master plan envisioned by ISDF<sup>42</sup> and the municipality of Cairo. The project details were published in (Freedom and Justice)<sup>43</sup> newspaper. The project details were about building new 4 high-rise apartments just beside the railway lines, each will be 12 floors high, and each floor would contain about 9 flats, and that the basements and the ground floors will be shops and workshops. The government project was about displacing the families in those 4 new buildings and to demolish the whole area and sell the rest of the land that will be 80 percent of the total area. The whole discussion around the idea of building those buildings and to move to it was another layer of violence in the area, the families felt so threatened of not understanding anything about the project and whether they will rent those flats or own it and if there will be a rent how much it will be? And why to live next to the railway station lines, and why to live next to the trains that pass by daily and shake the whole piece of land? So many questions rose up because of this project, and none of the residents or any other involved activists or non-governmental organizations had an answer to any of the questions. Consequently, on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013; some of *Ramlet Bulaq*'s residents with the collaboration of activists organized a march that started from *Ramlet Bulaq* to *Maspero* building<sup>44</sup> in order to demand governmental transparency regarding the project, asserting that they will not leave their land and I will elaborate more about the march in chapter 6. That day the residents decided to block the road and some of them were aggressive in their actions. The decision of blocking the road was by some women in the march. They thought this would be more effective so we can reach whoever is responsible about the project in the government. It was that time a known tactics from all the demonstration we have in Egypt after the revolution of January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011. And for the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* it was a tactic for being; as they hear in television and

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<sup>42</sup> Informal Settlements Development Fund

<sup>43</sup> (Freedom and Justice) newspaper "*El Horreya Wal Adala*"; is the Muslim brotherhood party. It was the ruling governmental party in the period June 2012 to June 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Official media and television governmental building

radio about others who have demands and they strike, block the roads and have sit-in, so it was an understandable tactic for their being and to tell the whole Egypt what the problem of their area was and the discrimination and violence and the injustice conditions they were facing.

#### **4.4. The Police:**

In May 2013 suddenly; or what appeared as such; one of the male residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* committed suicide. He was arrested years before and was kept in *Bulaq* police station for about month. A number of *Ramlet Bulaq*'s residents noted that after the police released him; he got a mental illness and he never got back to his old self. Ten days before his death he was arrested again and the police station's officers threatened him with 3 years in prison charging him in a drug dealing case from which he was innocent. The threat came in terms that they needed something from his brother and he did not respond. The residents claimed that after the young man got out of the police station he committed suicide because of his fear to be in jail or to get detained again, where he has been tortured. In the story of that man the relation between the residents and the state apparatus that is the police station is clear in how violent it is. The tension between the police men in *Bulaq* police station and the residents is a continuous relation of many accidents of violence whether physical or psychological ones. All the men are facing the threat of being arrested anytime in the area, and this fear of being arrested is part of why they want to leave and to live in any other district. They are trying all the time to hide behind good recognizable jobs that would protect them in front of the society as having a social status and in front of the police as trying to be respectful citizens.

Since then the Ministry of Interior are active in *Ramlet Bulaq* according to the residents' claims, the police enter the area to arrest some of the young men and accused them with many charges. In February 2014, the legal case in which 52 men were detained got sentenced. The 22 men of them who got released; they were tortured in the prison and once they released them; the jail transferred them to *Bulaq* police station in order to finish some legal papers to get back to their homes. In the police station they were tortured again by the police officers. This kind of violence is direct and implemented in a structural process to the families. Most of residents in the area are living the insecurity status of maybe being arrested anytime for any reason. And they asked some of the regular activists who usually visit them to keep visiting them as the police officers change the way in dealing with families if the human rights

defenders come to the area as they fear the scandals that may happen from the activists. So the structural violence I am explaining in this chapter turned to be like a routine for the residents, that everyday the police officers are in the area to arrest whoever. And on the other hand there is always a bunch of police officers standing in front of the Nile City Towers and the Administration of the Towers made a room for them in order to get rest and eat and so on. Those officers are dealing violently with the residents and they act as if they are the guards for the Nile City Towers.

#### **4.5.Conclusion:**

We can analyze this and see it as Hickel sees how the discourse of development created some kind of violence as he argues that the moral framework of people influenced the economic behavior as either constructive or destructive development or social reproduction. I am seeing many actions by the residents as escalating the resistance in order to push the government to take an action for their benefits.

My argument here is that the neo-liberal policy and the structural violence, the policies of neo-liberalism, happened to be used against certain strata of citizens that the government started in the 90s and built those towers on the Nile riverbank which produced a structural violence; in which second Bhaduri's quote:

The ruling neoliberal ideology pretends that the benefits of high growth trickle down automatically to the poor, but this proposition is not only empirically dubious; it is politically foolish in a parliamentary democracy, because the speed of trickling down remains unspecified while the government has to maintain a minimum degree of legitimacy to win elections. (Bhaduri 2007)

The analysis of each case of violence in the area; originally related to the fact that the administration of the towers and their desire to forcibly evict *Ramlet Bulaq* residents for the benefit of their development's investments. Those developmental plans are always for the benefit of the urban elite population; again in Bhaduri's words:

It certainly benefits the urban elite population, and leads to uncontrolled urbanization and mega cities with growing hunger for energy, water and urban housing space. We are told that world class cities are our goals, so slums have to be cleared without providing resettlement. Livelihoods of both urban and rural communities have to be destroyed for expanding and modernizing the cities. In the process the modes of transports we are creating with ore flyovers for cars,

bigger airports, the shopping and housing complex we are promoting become increasingly energy intensive, and the majority of our ordinary citizens who do consume them also have to pay directly or indirectly for this pattern of consumption. (Bhaduri 2007)

As Harvey asserted commercialism and property development occupy the space for a public-private partnership for the benefit of private rather than civic gain by the money of the public (Harvey 1990: 422).

As I explained how the structural violence is asserted in the everyday practices in the area; especially in how the police men are dealing with the residents and the residents feel threatened all the time and they are asking for protection from whoever. It becomes a struggle for being for anyone from *Ramlet Bulaq*. A son of one of the residents who is married and lives in another neighborhood was telling me that it is a must for the families to leave *Ramlet Bulaq* and to get away of this violence and the bad reputation of the area. And that if anyone would have a safe future, they should leave the area to find jobs and good living status and he kept comparing the neighborhood he is living in to *Ramlet Bulaq* and the difference in the neighbors and the security status.

Beginning with *Nessma's* story to *Amr El-Boni* and so many other stories about people who were subjected to violence that is structured against them and that formed the resistant actions and made the residents struggle for their being in their neighborhood.

## 5. Chapter Five

### Power and Everyday in *Ramlet Bulaq*

#### 5.1. Introduction:

In this chapter I am re-telling narratives I was told by the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq*, in which they talked about their work, life, children, and families, etc. Their stories represent their everyday life details, which constitute their lives. The everyday, which I approach through the narratives of various residents in *Ramlet Bulaq* and their daily practices, reveals a complex slice of how people are living their lives, and in the process are making themselves and the spaces they inhabit. Their stories are the strings to unpack the making and unmaking of their social life and their relations to *Ramlet Bulaq*. The overarching concept in this chapter is power as power is the thread that connects everything: the stories about laboring, marginality and space are all interconnected with power. Papadopoulos suggests in his book “Escape Routes” that:

Because events are never in the present, if we highlight their role in social change we do so at the expense of considering the potency of the present that is made of people’s everyday practices: the practices employed to navigate daily life and to sustain relations, the practices which are at the heart of social transformation long before we are able to name it as such. (Papadopoulos 2008: XII).

Papadopoulos talked about how everyday practices are important in understating the social transformations we are living in, or any other community would live. So the events that happened in *Ramlet Bulaq* have a role in the social change. As he argues, daily practices- routine, repetitive and ordinary as they may seem are in fact at the heart of the social transformations. So theoretically I am using his concept in understanding the everyday practices in *Ramlet Bulaq* as an analysis for understanding how the society is constructed, made livable, and how through these routine practices possibilities for change can emerge. By change here I mean the possibility for disrupting the naturalized structures of power by deploying “routes” in the language of Papadopolous for other ways of struggle, of laboring, and of sociability, of connecting to others, and of being writ large. There is no singular or progressive path that is adopted, nor are the effects necessarily one of victory over processes of marginalization, exploitation, or exclusion. Rather, what the everyday of people of *Ramlet Bulaq* connote are possibilities for another way of being within neoliberal governance. . As Papadopolous pointed out “Social transformation is not

about reason and belief; it is about perception and hope. It is not about the production of subjects, but about the making of life. It is not about subjectivity, it is about experience.” (Ibid XXI). In which I understand that social transformations are not about cause and effect, and in the case of *Ramlet Bulaq* is not about one accident and/or one event but it is more about the perception of people to those events as collective events that happened in the area, and it is more about their experience and the actions they take and it is not about the subjectivity or the conditions of the events of itself but more about how it influences the subjectivity of the people and their composed experience out of those events. In *Ramlet Bulaq*; all the events that happened changed the everyday life for the residents, and are what formed the social transformation in the society of *Ramlet Bulaq* and the January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 was an event which changed the actions of the people.

As I mentioned earlier, the analysis in this chapter will vary between power as the concept of the everyday. Power here is rendering the individuals who are actors of their subjectification and how all the complexity in power dynamics changed their actions and tactics for being. Moreover it changed their everyday lives and the things that are regularly they do each day in dealing with work, jobs, family and the space. (Papadopoulos 2008: XV). The bio-political and the power dynamics are major in my understanding of the social transformations which happened in *Ramlet Bulaq*. I deploy the construct of the everyday as a tool in understanding the how and the effects of such social transformations; so power and everyday are the main concepts around which I organize this chapter. .

## **5.2. Power in *Ramlet Bulaq*:**

After the clashes of August 2, 2012 which culminated that day in the death of *Amr El-Boni* and the arrest of the 52 young men, a number of human rights non-governmental organizations got involved in the case. Their lawyers decided to work on the case to defend the 52 men who were arrested. During the same week, the non-governmental organizations discovered that an announcement was published in June in the official governmental newspapers to declare that Cairo governorate is taking the land of *Ramlet Bulaq*, which was described as an informal settlement and I already explained in the last chapter. The lawyers told the residents, and they all decided to sue the government to negate this announcement and to acknowledge *Ramlet Bulaq* residents’ right of staying on the land, which had to be proven.

*A'm Gaber* said:



After the accident; on the next day that was August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012, the Prime Minister *Hisham Kandil* came to see what happened. On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 he was recruited for this position in *Mohamed Morsi's* government. He visited the Nile City Towers to see the damage that happened in the glass door of the mall. And he did not come to see *Ramlet Bulaq*. He went to see the classy people, who for sure are having benefits and business with each other. Why didn't he come to us? For sure he knows that someone died and that person is from *Ramlet Bulaq* not from the Towers. Can you believe this? The door and two burnt cars<sup>45</sup> were much more important for the government and for the Prime Minister; but the souls are worth nothing for them and the dead bodies as long as it is not of the important people then it is not worth asking about it. (Khalil, 2014).<sup>46</sup>

A campaign - "Ahyaa' Bel Esm Faqat" (we are alive only by name) emerged at that time to help the residents. They helped the lawyers to mobilize the families, organized a march that started from *Ramlet Bulaq* up to the general prosecutor to ask him to release the detainees as they were all innocent. They also helped them demand that the policemen who killed and injured their neighbors and relatives be held accountable and punished. Also the members of the campaign and the residents organized two public conferences in *Ramlet Bulaq* to attract the media and the journalists to defend their status and right to living in the area against the governmental announcement to evacuate the people and acquire the land. They also demanded the release of the 52 detainees. In parallel to all of this, a popular local committee was formed from a number of residents in the area to represent the families and to negotiate with whoever negotiates about whatever demands. I am not sure why certain residents were chosen but it depended on their wisdom while speaking and they tried to choose the people who do not have any history with the police so they would be classified as respectful citizens. Moreover, their members were invited in to talk shows on TV to present their case to the public. The case of *Ramlet Bulaq* stayed hot and in the spotlight for couple of months then it faded away, as the court cases were underway, one regarding the detainees and the other the right to not be removed from the land. Again the traumatizing events that happened in *Ramlet Bulaq* became part of their everyday life; I mean that daily there are groups of police men who are

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<sup>45</sup> The door is the front glass door of the Nile City towers and the cars are belonging to employees who work inside the towers.

<sup>46</sup> Personal Interview with A'm Gaber. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

entering the area in order to arrest someone or a group of young men accusing them of taking drugs or stealing something. Moreover it becomes normal that most of the residents have lawyer's phone numbers on their cell phones so whenever any of them got arrested, they called the lawyers. It is a good relation between the residents and the human rights' defenders as the residents realized the NGOs role and mission and a relation of trust was built between them. So after the clashes of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 and the killing of *Amr El-Boni*, the everyday changes in matters of dealing with the police, another part changed in their everyday that weekly some families are visiting their sons who are arrested in jail, moreover weekly visits to the lawyers whether the human rights' defenders ones or other private lawyers who the family asked them to defend their children's position. So all the visits to *Ramlet Bulaq* after the big clashes in August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012; were full of hearing the detainees' stories and what the legal case status is.

By the beginning of March, 2013 one of the residents called to tell me that there is a development master plan envisioned by Informal Settlements Development Fund and the municipality of Cairo. They asked me about my opinion regarding this project. The project details were published in one newspaper (Freedom and Justice) "*El Horreya Wal Adala*"; that is the Muslim brotherhood party and was by then the ruling government party. And I already mentioned the project details in the last chapter. The four towers of the project are to be located in *El-Seka Al-Hadeed* area that is in front of the railways. As outlined in the newspaper, the families will be moved to those flats and the rest of the land will be sold by Cairo governor (*El Horreya Wal Adala* March 2012). April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013, some of *Ramlet Bulaq*'s residents with the collaboration of activists organized a march that started from *Ramlet Bulaq* to *Maspero* building (Official media and television governmental building) in order to call for governmental transparency regarding the project, in addition to demanding freedom of the detainees who were imprisoned after August 2012. Consequently, the Cairo Governor asked them for a meeting and the municipalities decided to survey and count the families in the area in order to know how many flats are required to resettle the families after the evacuation process. It was interesting enough to find that the residents are following different newspapers to know what is written about *Ramlet Bulaq*, whether it is related to the legal cases of the land and/or the detainees. It was interesting as part of their everyday life changed in caring about the news and what the government would announce about them behind their back. Since the clashes and

the announcement of the land's evacuation; a new sense of concerns began in the area, and the level of trust they even have between each other decreased, as some of them expressed their worries that may be others are making deals with the government and/or with the administration of the Nile City Towers.

In the same time of the march and the meetings with the municipalities; two things happened: the administration of the Nile City Towers in the presence of their lawyer asked for a meeting with representatives from *Ramlet Bulaq* as they wanted to buy the land and they wanted to negotiate the land price, so they can evacuate the families and to take the land to implement their project that is an investment project to complete their touristic vision for the area. The representatives were the local popular committee members; and they attended the meeting, but they disagreed on the price. Although there was a confrontation between the representatives as some of them did not want to sell as he knows that lots of families do not have an alternative shelter to go to; even if they will get money, it will be a small amount that will not be enough for getting another shelter and I will elaborate on this point later. *Ramlet Bulaq* actually divided into different groups according to their benefits and belief in how far they can deal again with the Nile City Towers administration or not. Some of the disagreements that day was because some of them believed that the legal case against the government in the land issue would get them their rights and make them more powerful in front of everyone, while others believed they should sell the land and leave the area, and others thought that they should negotiate whatever will happen and that it is better to get a good relation back with the administration. Those confrontations between the groups were understandable because of the history they have in the area and as I mentioned before how traumatizing were the past evens and how many times they got cheated whether by the administration of the Nile City Towers or the government or by another residents or neighbors inside *Ramlet Bulaq*.

These processes made families realize how strong they were. The processes and all the negotiations and meetings they were asked to attend made them feel they have a position of power in talking with everyone. And at the same time they were waiting for the judge to announce his judgment in the land case. Moreover, they were asked officially by the governor to count the families. Besides the representatives were asked for a meeting with the head of the district himself as he was new and he wanted to understand what was going on in the area, of which he was the head administrative figure.

At the same time, a member from the Freedom and Justice party asked for a meeting with the families; again to negotiate with them the price of the land. That member was a member in the people's assembly before and he was born in *Bulaq Fares*; one of the representatives said:

I knew him from before; he was very active after the revolution in *Bulaq* as he was nominated for the People's Assembly elections in November 2011. He came several times here and gave families money. Moreover the mosque leadership in here is related to him and lots of families are getting a monthly amount of money from the mosque. This man is also a construction contractor. So I am sure he is cooperating with the government for two things; first the government is already from The Muslim Brotherhood and he is a member in their party, on the other hand; if they would implement those four towers after removing us; for sure he would be the contractor of the project, so he will get lots of money. (Khalil, 2013).<sup>47</sup>

*Fares* asserted in so many occasions how the Muslim Brotherhood's power in the area is so weak, and how much he hates them because they are manipulating people by the name of religion. Besides they offered him to be with them and to get money and he refused. *Fares* also talked about the corruption inside the Muslim Brotherhood and how people are getting so much money while being members. Unofficially, the group in the mosque beside *Ramlet Bulaq* invited some of the stakeholders in the area and who have influence over the residents and tried to ask them to stop their demonstrations and objections to the government. But most of the residents did not respond to them and they had different fights with them asking them to stop interfering in their movements and their position trying to get their rights.

From this thread we can see the different powers that try to manipulate and control *Ramlet Bulaq*'s issue, people and space. To enumerate them, we have The Nile City Towers administration, the municipalities represented of in the head of the district and the Cairo governor. Then we have the Muslim Brotherhood representative, besides the group of the local mosque. On another level, we have the lawyers of the non-governmental organizations, whose two organizations were involved, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) and The Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR). Then we have the members of (Alive just

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<sup>47</sup> Personal Interview with Fares. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

by Names) campaign. The media, social media and the journalists performed other layers of power, as their participation in the events and their public representation of the case to a larger audience was important in shaping a public discourse.

Besides all of these outside and external anchors of power there are other nodes of power that shaped the dynamics between the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq*. For example, the first popular local committee (*Lagna Sha'abeya*) to form in the area had certain members. One of those members is in his early thirties, after two to three months the residents discovered that he is attending meetings with different people from the municipalities without telling them. Moreover he was negotiating for things that they did not know about. As a consequence, they asked him not to be in the committee and then they ignored him in the meetings and no one invited him for any march and/or any event. Some of the families stopped dealing with him; others kept doing this as they had social networks with him. Moreover he was providing some families in the area with services like getting a plumber to fix stuff and fix the water network they just built. During the days when the governmental employees were counting the families in the area as the residents asked for in the meeting, the same person lied about the ownership of his house that is an inherited house from his father to him and his uncles and aunts. The next day, his aunts and uncles who are no longer living in *Ramlet Bulaq* came and they beat him up and they asked the employees to change the information they had in their official records.

“The money changed the people and the relations in the area, since the building of the Nile City Towers, everything changed because of the money” (Khalil, 2014).<sup>48</sup> The previous sentences said by *Fares* and *A'm Gaber* and many other informants when I was asking about the changes in the area show that part of their everyday changes date to the time when the Nile City Towers were built; as the lawyer of the towers began to ask them to sell their houses in a peaceful way. Some of them were encouraged to sell the house and they were happy to have some money, yet it was not enough to find another shelter to live in in Cairo. And the fights and the power dynamics changed internally in the area because of that. Some families encouraged other families to sell and some families refused. Even they were not telling the true amount of money they got for selling the house and this hiding for the prices harmed their position in front of the Nile City Towers' administration.

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<sup>48</sup> Personal Interview. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

Another internal element that compounded the tensions between families after the accident of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 relates to the effects of detentions. While some families were only concerned about members who were in jail, others prioritized the land case issue in their fight with the government. This tension was magnified in the many confrontations and clashes during meetings. There were families who cared just about the land issue and they were divided into different groups, some wanted to sell the land and take the money then leave; some wanted to stay but they wanted some kind of development to the infrastructure and maintenance to the houses. Others were fine to take another flat built by the government in other neighborhoods and leave the area. For other groups of families their priorities evolved around the detainees' issue. Even among this group tensions rose and fights erupted as some of the detainees never made it to jail; their names were among those charged, but they ran away and disappeared and the police could not get hold of them. Consequently, the families whose children were in jail accused the families whose children ran away that they did not care enough about the court case because their children were free.

This confrontation around land and kinship issue between the families caused many problems in two situations, as exemplified in two instances. One was at the march of April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012 when some wanted to assert the detainees issue, while others raised the land problem and they asked the chant leaders to have slogans for both and even they asked us to write certain slogans reflecting their demands. . The other situation was in June 2013 as the residents and non-governmental organizations and the activists held a conference in the area and reminded everyone what happened over one year since June 2012 as the plan was to make another propaganda around the case of *Ramlet Bulaq* and to make it more live in the media as maybe this would help in the status of the legal cases, and we made a documentary exposing all the events and accidents that the area witnessed. After the screening some of the residents began to speak about the land issue, so the other families who have detained members began to shout and asked to speak about their children.

Land and social networks are the key issues in the making and unmaking of *Ramlet Bulaq*. They also pose serious ethical and political concerns, and pose critical questions regarding units of analysis. The dissent among the residents reminds us that there is nothing that can be easily packed and bound as a singular entity named “the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq*”; I used this phrase so many times in my writing and here I should clarify,,: when we speak about the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq*; we are speaking

about a group and what their demands and their own problems as a group inside *Ramlet Bulaq* are. The issue of representation here is problematic; no one can speak about all the families. Moreover the gender question is very important similar to age as a category of analysis. Lots of women in different families and from different groups did not want to leave the area and they did not want to sell their houses; otherwise the men in the same families attended meetings speaking and negotiating the prices of the land and the price of their own houses. Maybe the men wanted to leave because they are more subjected to be arrested or going to jail than women. And maybe it is more easy for men to form new social networks in a new area but it is not as easy for women as they spend more time in the area. Even In that march; women were the majority! Are they caring more about the land, the home and their neighborhood (Kumar 1993: 189)? I am not trying to romanticize the role of women in *Ramlet Bulaq* and/or assuming their practices as kind of emancipation; I am just trying to unpack the division of labor. In addition, women's experiential roles in which relate to ideological framework (Sangari & Vaid 1989: 3). Age as well was another important factor along with the differences and positions that were being articulated. Most of the old people did not want to sell and/or to leave their old houses and the areas which they were used to. Their children, on the other hand, were now in the process of forming their own families and getting married. They wanted to leave the area as moving up the social ladder was their dream, after the many problems and traumas they experienced in the area.

Age, gender and social networks and forms of association shape laboring in *Ramlet Bulaq*. Similar tensions and confrontations evolved around laboring practices and concerns in the area. Women who worked in the area and those who stayed in their houses the whole day and made use of the space in front of their houses are among those who refused to leave their area. I will elaborate on this below. Other people in *Ramlet Bulaq* worked in nearby places; sometimes in the Nile City Towers, *Souq El-A'asr* or in *Wekalet El-Balah* and they did not want to suffer the reallocation from *Ramlet Bulaq*. They did not want to seek other means of earning a living, already scarce and uncertain, nor did they want or were capable from the income they earn to pay daily transportation costs to and from their work places.

As I explained before, one of the overarching concepts in this thesis is power. And as I just elaborated in the previous paragraphs, residents in *Ramlet Bulaq* are struggling with different institutions and agents that represent different nodes of

power; some external agents i.e. Nile City Towers' administration and security, Cairo governor and administrative head of Bulaq, police station, Informal Settlement Development Fund (ISDF) and candidates for people assembly elections, and some other agents who contributed to internal tensions starting with Muslim Brotherhood group in the mosque i.e Imam, the popular committee, men in authority because of their age and/or power in the area, old age people who are manipulating the rent prices in the area, social networks' relations as who is coming from which family. In addition the administrations of the Nile City Towers keep negotiating to peacefully buy the houses from some of the residents. Consequently, some of *Ramlet Bulaq* residents negotiated the price of their house plots, and others refused to sell. These power dynamics influenced the residents in so many different ways, from one house to another those dynamics and authorities are changing depending on the different factors.

While in the last chapter where *Nessma's* story was important in demonstrating different layers of violence; for the residents *Nessma* is also important as an icon of power. Residents construct *Nessma* as the first violent event between them and the tower administration. The killing of *Nessma* gave a clear message of violence that the Tower administration will not stop at anything in the face of resistance from the residents. The tower's administration for the residents demonstrated that they are capable of killing residents without leaving behind any shred of evidence that could be used against them. According to Foucault we can consider *Nessma's* resistance against different forms of power as a starting point, as a catalyst to exercising power in face of the Towers, (Foucault 2000: 329). Her resistance unfolded the strategies that may be used by the towers as an opposed power of capital. In other words the killing of *Nessma* gives an idea to the residents what would happen to anyone who would resist the power of the Nile City Towers. And Deleuze in his explaining to rhizome and the plateau of power and David Harvey in relating city issues and struggles to economy as he argued that commercialism and property development occupy the space for a public-private partnership for the benefit of private rather than civic gain by the money of the public (Harvey 1990: 422). The three authors quote power in different dimensions, first Foucault of how power relations are everywhere within each group of people in each institution. Then Deleuze of the idea of intersectionality between different planes and here I am using it to map the relationship between different agents as I explained before. Third is Harvey and how



to understand those power relations in relation to the political economy and the external influence of the neo-liberal agenda of the government (Bhaduri 2007)<sup>49</sup> and the difference between the residents in urban elites and urban slums.

### **5.3. Laboring in Ramlet Bulaq:**

*Fares*, 37 years-old man was born in *Ramlet Bulaq*. He started his work after he finished his military service as a worker in *Souq El-A'asr* market in *El-Sabteya*, and then he joined The Nile Company for construction works where he trained to be a Worker in heavy machinery used in the construction of airstrips. He believes that the building of the Nile City Towers brought the worst to the whole area. When the company built the towers, they attracted the people and the residents with their money. While the Nile Towers were being built, they offered him a job as a construction worker, but he refused, as he did not feel comfortable towards the company from the beginning. Moreover this was not his field of experience; he liked being a unique worker using heavy machinery. After he left the Nile Company that is a governmental company, *Contrak Company* asked him to work with them. *Contrak* is part of *Orascom Company* owned by *Naguib Sawiris* who already owned part of The Nile City Towers. *Contrak Company* hired him to travel to Afghanistan in 2003 to construct airports there. *Fares* told many stories about his trip to Afghanistan and the discrimination he and other colleagues of him were subjected to in the fieldwork because of religion, language and/or race. The company agreed with him on a certain wage, but when he arrived in Afghanistan he found it less. They promised him the rest after the completion of the job, but then he came back and until this day he did not get his money. *Fares* always feels he has a vengeance against the Nile City Towers, *Sawiras* and *Contrak Company* for the money he was promised and never received. He always felt he wasted three years of his life working outside Egypt and he lost an important chance in continuing in the Nile Company where he used to work. When *Fares* got married in 2011 he moved to another neighborhood outside of *Ramlet Bulaq*. His wife did not want to stay in the area and she wanted to be beside her family, but *Fares* was spending too much time in *Ramlet Bulaq* in his family

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<sup>49</sup> “The ruling neoliberal ideology pretends that the benefits of high growth trickle down automatically to the poor, but this proposition is not only empirically dubious; it is politically foolish in a parliamentary democracy, because the speed of trickling down remains unspecified while the government has to maintain a minimum degree of legitimacy to win elections.” Bhaduri, Amit (2007) ‘Alternatives in Industrialisation’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42 (18)

house. *Fares* today is one of the most active members in the local popular committee and he represented them so many times in the media and television.

I cannot assume or say that *Fares's* relation to the space of *Ramlet Bulaq* is constituted by his labor; but he always expressed that he would prefer to live in *Ramlet Bulaq* because he knows everyone and in the new neighborhood he feels like a stranger. Despite all the problems *Fares* faces in *Ramlet Bulaq*, he has a sense of belonging to the area. His relation to the space is constituted through his relations to his friends and the social networks and relations he has. He got used to the fact that his work does not relate to the area; but all his brothers are working in the area and he is speaking about this relationship to the area saying “My brothers cannot leave here as their work is here in different places and worships inside and outside *Ramlet Bulaq*, why would we leave?” (Khalil 2014).<sup>50</sup> Suddenly *Fares* said:

You know Ms. Omnia, we left this house before the revolution and we sold it to the Nile City Towers and we moved to another flat in another area; but we felt strangers, we wanted to come back and in the first chance we could we did and my family get back to their work in here (Khalil 2014).<sup>51</sup>

In the last sentence *Fares* asserted that his brothers' relations to *Ramlet Bulaq* are not just about labor but he also spoke about the bonds of social networks, and later on his mother spoke much more about it.

Another man named *Ali*, is 55 years old. He explained:

I am a metal worker (*Haddad*). I was born in *Ramlet Bulaq*; all of us were born here. The Nile City Towers for a very cheap price bought everything that was here: workshops, cafes, storages and factories. The street was beautiful and since they built the Towers the street became ugly and everything else became ugly as well. There were a number of very good workshops. When they closed them down; it turned to be a disaster for me. I had to move to *Souq El-Aasr*. For 40 years now I am working in metal works. But beside what I am doing as a metal worker; as it is not enough for living. So I got some chips, sweets and candies and I sell them here in *Ramlet Bulaq*. Lots of people left the area because of the Towers. They lost their jobs and/or their houses. All the workshops were here and they provided everyone with work. Everyone here should find a job in here; especially the glass factory, it

<sup>50</sup> Personal Interview with *Fares*. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

<sup>51</sup> Personal Interview with *Fares*. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

needed lots of workers, workers at the glass factory came from *Ramlet Bulaq, Bashteel, El-Warak, Imababa, El-Wehda* and *Rod El-Farag*. We preferred to have the work beside the houses; that's why all of us trained and worked in those workshops, they were beside our houses and we did not have to use transportation and in the lunch hour we can go back home have lunch with our wives and children. Lots of people had to change their jobs because they were dismissed from their original work. I was a unique case to continue what I was doing as I already knew that workshop in *Souq El-Aasr*. But many others have to turn to be drivers to minibuses then in the last years to Toktoks' (It is a three wheel carriage that is used in popular neighborhoods and slums; others turned to be traders or vendors in different markets and some of them as well worked in the parking lots in front of *Ramlet Bulaq*. The glass factory was huge; there were about 700 workers; even women and girls worked in the glass factory. The factory manufactured glass, medicine and perfume bottles. (Khalil 2014).<sup>52</sup>

A sense of romanticization appeared in Ali's words; he talked about the period before the building of the Nile City Towers as if everything was perfect. And actually many other residents did the same; but I analyze this as part of their trauma after the accident of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012. In Egypt especially in the last three years and because of the deterioration in the economic status; everyone is asserting that everything gets harder and harder and that the old days were better in more comfortable for the living conditions status. But in *Ramlet Bulaq*, because so many power dynamics changed after the accident of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012; so it appears in the narratives how people use the words of before and after the accident; mostly that the neighbor relation to the Nile City towers in which I elaborate in the last chapter affected their existence and everyday and that is why it remained significant. Moreover, they and after the accident consider the Nile City Towers as their enemy who interrupted their life and work. *Ali's* relation to space is manifested in his labor; whether as a metal worker or even as a street vendor in front of his house. He asserted his relation to *Ramlet Bulaq* in what he is doing that is his labor, he sees all the chances of work in the space of *Ramlet Bulaq*; as he romanticizes it saying that he lived in the area his whole life and he will die in the same area.

Another resident in *Ramlet Bulaq*, *Sha'awa* said

I started working as a construction worker in the construction field of the Nile City Towers; I worked for 6 years until they finished the

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<sup>52</sup> Personal Interview with Ali. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

Towers. Then they asked me to go work in Smart Village in *Setta October* (6<sup>th</sup> of October); so I refused. Why would I go and work in there?" (Khalil 2014).<sup>53</sup>

He decided to stop working with them just because he did not want to move daily to *Setta October* and he asserted that if he accepted it that he could not afford the transportations' fees everyday. He said

I prefer keep this relation to *Ramlet Bulaq* by working in different jobs in the same area. It is better as I am always working with friends moreover I can wake up late and have breakfast with friends or with family then see what is offered today (Khalil 2014).<sup>54</sup>

*Sha'awa* asserted his relation to the space and he decided to constitute it by his labor, he does not mind working different things everyday as long as he is not leaving the space of *Ramlet Bulaq*.

What I am trying to explain here by the stories by the residents that the building of the towers forced the people to change their work and their daily activity. An old woman called *O'm Kimo* who is cooking inside her kitchen and sell for everyone in *Ramlet Bulaq*, she said:

I started cooking *Koshari* (A traditional Egyptian dish that contains rice, pasta, beans, tomato sauce and friend onion on its top) and *Macarona* (Pasta with tomato sauce) about 25 to 30 years ago. I had a small carriage to put everything on and I was standing in front of the residential area, beside the old factories and workshops and the garden. Everyone used to come and eat. Since they built the towers, they began to ask me to stop standing outside then the security if the Nile City Towers started to harass me then the police, so I had to move inside my house and also in the last two years I cannot stand for long time; so I prefer inside the house so I can sit from time to time. But actually I preferred standing in the street; I was moving and talking with lot of people. I felt I am connected to the world in a way. (Khalil 2013).<sup>55</sup>

*O'm Kimo*, like Ali, romanticizes her relation to *Ramlet Bulaq* and to the history of the space. As they are speaking about the past as if it is full of joy and happiness, it is some kind of nostalgia in here. While I was watching her while selling *Koshari* to

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<sup>53</sup> Personal Interview with Sha'awa. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

<sup>54</sup> Personal Interview with Sha'awa. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

<sup>55</sup> Personal Interview with O'm Kimo. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

the kids and teenagers in the area; she knew everyone by name, age and what they are doing. She gave each of them advice like concentrating in their study, and to other one to keep working to be a good craft man when he grow up. And she advised another girl who looked 19 or 20 that she should work even if she gets married as her husband should not afford her all of what she wants and that working would give her a value and a meaning. She lectured the young woman who had a fight with her husband about money, *O'm Kimo* talked for more than 30 minutes about the value of work and she kept telling her stories with *Koshari* and why she is still working until that age and even she does not need this work now and that her children are already giving her money.

That woman in a way made the argument I would, she did not talk about the space while she was talking to the girl; she is already making it the space and she is achieving the social networking she used to. It is clear how her relation to the space and to the neighbors is what constitutes her relation to *Ramlet Bulaq*, if she moved to another area she would not do the same things.

In responding to my questions she talked about the space and the labor as previously explained. As I knew that she moved to sell her *Koshari* inside her house mainly because of her age and she did not want to confront anymore the policemen nor the security of the Nile City towers. She asserted that all of her children are married and they were living in very good flats in other areas outside of *Ramlet Bulaq* and they asked her many times to move and live with them where they have Televisions and better facilities than hers. , But she said that she is related to the space and she loves what she is doing and she feels her importance here in *Ramlet Bulaq* as if just one day she did not cook *Koshari*, all the children would complain and come to ask her to get well soon and make them the food they love.

#### **5.4. Space of *Ramlet Bulaq*:**

The place in relation to people's everyday life has too much significance in *Ramlet Bulaq*. As in Simone's research, my attempt is to see new dimensions of urban analysis by studying particular aspects of individual and collective behavior outside all the formal and known institutions and quarters (Simone 2004: 16). Simone argues that no one really appreciates and/or understands the importance of the informal process in which residents are making it collaboratively outside any form of state apparatus (Simone 2004: 16). The practices in *Ramlet Bulaq* as an informal area are related to the land, to the use of the place or "Places are shared spaces" (Massey 1994:

137). Harcourt and Escobar argued that there is nothing as such called 'place' as a pure entity; as places and spaces are being affected by multiple factors locally and globally. People who replace and/or forced to leave their places are influenced by other factors that make places complex with multiple layers of composition (Harcourt and Escobar 2005: 12). In addition, places have been identified as means of constructing identities; localities influence the people who are living in the place. (Massey 1994: 137). So how does *Ramlet Bulaq* as a place shapes the making of the people, is a question of this research. In other words, there are spatial reorganizations of social relations where those social relations are full of meaning and power and localities here are not bounded but it are spaces of interaction (Massey 1994: 121). So places are products of complex and changing geography of social relations (Massey 1994: 172). Those social relations are bound with certain activities and practices and are actually influenced by the global economy as well. As Harcourt and Escobar argue in their article 'Women and The Politics of Place' there is a struggle over places for those who claim a right to equitable place within and others who prefer to live without the capitalist globalization (Harcourt and Escobar 2005: 8). So understanding the global economy and the neo-liberal agenda is important as I previously explained in chapter two. The global economy is affecting the Egyptian one; I mean that Egypt is contextualizing places in the worlds and as I explained before neo-liberalism affected Egypt and made social transformations. And in *Ramlet Bulaq* in particular; the construction of the Nile City Towers is part of the neoliberalism agenda by the Egyptian government and it made lots of social transformations in which affected the everyday life of the residents.

The historical analysis of how urbanized Cairo was shaped between 1952 and 1993 shows how informal settlements grew rapidly according to changes in the political and economic context (El-Kady 2009). Singerman<sup>56</sup> argues how Cairo as a city is composed of multiplicity of urbanization layers; which allows us "to unpack Cairo through a geography of ambivalence on the ground and to see new possibilities for its future as its residents dynamically continue their 'city-making'" (Singerman 2009: 32). David Sims described Cairo as *A City Out of Control*. He analyzed and

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<sup>56</sup> "Cairo Contested takes a different tack. It takes seriously the conflicting forces of globalization that are playing themselves out on the spaces, bodies, and lived experience of Cairo's population" Singerman, D., (2009). *Cairo contested: Governance, urban space, and global modernity*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press. Page# 29

mapped the Great Cairo Region as formal, informal and desert city. Personally, I do second Simone in his questioning of how residents are making their everyday life in informal ways (Simone 2004: 15).

*Ramlet Bulaq* residents' "informal" movements are what constitute them in the space.

We must always consider that places themselves are sites of unequal, even oppressive, power relations, and that for many, even identifying 'one's place' is a politically and personally complex task, full of painful ambivalences but potentially progressive possibilities. (Harcourt and Escobar 2005: 12).

People came to work in *Bulaq* according to the migration process that Egypt witnessed. They built their houses, worked, educated their children and provided their labour power. They constituted themselves by having jobs, but again they were marginalized as they did not have infrastructure and other services. And then the governmental institution classified the area as informal and unsafe area. But the residents informally are handling their basic vital needs every day, those practices of living and built a neighborhood with their vital needs defined their status as citizens.

All the stories by the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* are related to one space; the same spaces which they are all using daily. No one of them specifically talked about the idea of the space. But all the time there talked about the same area.

*O'm Fares* told me:

We moved to a flat in *El-Kanater*, but we could not manage to live in there. We did not know anyone in there. Moreover I hated staying inside the flat, why should I stay indoors all the day and here in *Ramlet Bulaq* I am always sitting in front of my house enjoying the sun. And from hour to another; someone passes in front of my house and we chat, and the children and my grandchildren are playing in front of my eyes. I hated living in *El-Kanater* and I never got to know who is living beside me. I felt I am a stranger. (Khalil 2014).<sup>57</sup>

Some women in *Ramlet Bulaq* or actually lots of them always sit in front of their houses. They even move to bigger squares in front of others' houses in order to sit with other women, to talk, chat and enjoy their time together. Some of them are

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<sup>57</sup> Personal Interview with O'm Fares. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

actually using these spaces to sell some products, while chatting with other women. Men also are doing the same; the old ones are sitting during the day and the younger ones are hanging out in those same spaces in the evenings after finishing their work. So they talk, smoke and listen to music together.

For some of the residents in *Ramlet Bulaq*; their everyday activities are not clearly divided between work and social activities. As I mentioned before in *Sha'awa's* narrative, he interwove the social with labor and for sure it is already interwoven with space. The same is true for other residents: they sit, chat, work in the same space for the whole day, like *O'm Kimo* who cooks and sells her *Koshari*; the space, social and labor are all combined and working together. They are using the space in multiple facades and their livings in the space are embedded in so many narratives and activities, exemplifying how they constitute their everyday in space.

Another aspect that is very important that is relating to the potentiality of the space; how the people are making use of the space in those multiple ways. And here I would like to think as an architect as I was trained as a student. They taught us that each space is defined for certain people and with certain activities. Otherwise if you have a space that is not defined as such, the space then it will turn into a dumb space. The professors and doctors used one phrase most of times to convince us that is a famous quote by the French architect Le Corbusier "Everyone's space is no body's space". Their routinized quote related to modernity or the so called formal areas, or the slums cannot be made to fit in its logic. But what we can be sure of that the people of *Ramlet Bulaq* are making use of each single place, they have, even if it is "no body's space." The potentiality I am referring to is a potentiality of productivity and creativity in using spaces; moreover productivity related to the things they produced daily even while chatting, I am not here romanticizing their activities but I am trying to find another perspective to look at their daily activities even if many are so miserable and harmful to them. With harming here I mean like a very old lady and she sells sweets in order to get some little money to be able to eat. So not all the activities are inspiring or comfortable or that the residents can in practice they really choose to do it. Again and with potentiality; I am taking an opposite position and a political one against all the discourses that criminalize the residents of the what so called slums, the discourse of the media and the government of othering the residents in the what so called informal sector whether residentially or in working status. Marginalizing one sector of the residents that actually represent the majority of the



citizens is a crime, and it is not about that they are the majority in numbers or not but it is more about that they are the people of the city and they are the ones who made the space and the what so called home or Egypt.

Another side of potentiality here is how they are running a separate capital out of the economic system in the country. Their selling and buying is out of the regime and the government. It is what so called informal sector as they do not pay taxes or whatever percentage to the Egyptian economy. But the potentiality here is in preserving their economic status and find alternatives than the government can provide them.

Their houses are not closed spaces, they are always extended and introverted outside the house, in the yard in front of them house. Some of families are actually using the in front yards to grow greens and plants, those plants are sometimes useful in ways that they plant food or peppermint for tea.

When the Nile City Towers were built and the administration started to buy some of the houses; they were intelligent enough that they bought a house in each small alley. In another words; on purpose they bought houses so they own pieces of land that are everywhere in *Ramlet Bulaq*. It is not located in the same area. As when you look to the map of *Ramlet Bulaq* you can observe that there is a plot of land that is owned by the Nile City Towers in each alley; so even while walking in the alleys between every three houses, you will find one collapsed and that is a mark that it is owned to the Towers not to the families. And the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* asserted that they made use of this strategy in so many levels; one of them is to destroy their bonds by evacuating lots of the inner plots between the houses; it even makes the houses that are beside weaker in its physical structure. As *Ramlet Bulaq* has urban compacted fabric as I explained before in chapter two that means that the houses are all beside each other and strengthen each other as a structure. Besides that the administration of the Nile City Towers put a condition in the contracts that the inhabitants of the house after getting the money should demolish the house by themselves. On one hand they did want a guarantee that the residents will not come back to inhabit the same house again. They wanted to a have the house that was besides more weak structure wise. This demolishing process for the sold houses turned the land plots to be garbage and dump area that attracts lots of bugs, animals and so on. That is why it is a must for lots of families in *Ramlet Bulaq* to clean and green those empty land plots in front of their houses in order to keep the animals,

bugs and creeping creatures that may harm their children and/or cause them diseases. As while I was sitting with *O'm Fares* in front of her house; she pointed at the empty plots in front of her saying that there were couple of houses her then they sold it to the Nile City Towers administration and they demolish part of the houses. So after a while she and her children continued to demolish the houses in order to clean the area; it is a high plot, I mean high on the level as they break the walls and managed to make it flat as much as they can because it is expensive to move away the piles of bricks, cements and walls.

Here again we see the spaces that turned into productive spaces, how the family of *O'm Fares* decided to turn these dump areas into ones filled with greenery and each time I visit them; I find one of the family members planting, irrigating or cleaning the trees and plants. And actually when I was first visiting *Ramlet Bulaq* I was surprised with those green areas and I asked myself; how the residents in middle of this violence and clashes have good feelings and a positive relationship to the space. Then I realized it is a matter of productivity; this is part of their everyday; even some families are raising pets, I mean dogs and cats and they take care and them and get them food which in a minute do not seem logic comparing to their finical status. The taking care of plants and/or animal is part of their everyday life and the old men and/or the housewives who are not working are considering this part of their daily labor in the area.

One of the main unique features in *Ramlet Bulaq* that once you cross the walls that surround the area, you feel you are in an introvert space. The walls I spoke about in chapter two that surround *Ramlet Bulaq* and that was built after the construction of the Nile city Towers. Once you cross the walls; you reach a big space like a plaza, to your left side there is that very old house and on your right side the houses started beside each other. This plaza takes you to two roads, both of them are narrow in a way, then after a number of houses you find another plaza or small square where women, men or group of children are playing, chatting, cooking, washing the cloth. Moreover you quickly begin to observe if anything changed; are that woman is in her house or not; does the other is cleaning; or maybe the other is putting the cloth the get dry in the air in front of her house and another group of children just got *Koshari* from *O'm Kimo* and they are walking, eating and chatting.

### **5.5. Marginality in *Ramlet Bulaq*:**

“Anthropology came to fill the savage slot in the trilogy order-utopia-savagery, a trilogy which preceded anthropology’s institutionalization and gave it continuing coherence in spite of interdisciplinary shifts” (Trouillot 1991: 40). The savage slot is still a valid argument as there are groups of people who are still marginalized because of their color skin, religion, gender and/or class, or way of being, etc.

The modernization project that teaches people to envision a certain life style which they see in the media i.e. television and advertisings, people desire a certain shape of home, place and locality to live in. Those media reflected a certain image about how the city and the home should look like; and that the modern citizen should live in planned organized cities. Internal migrants are moving in search of better live standards, as the project of modernization structured them to believe that city is the evolution process to be modern. People move to cities and build their own spaces of shelter, follow their practices of making community, and seek access to services and infrastructure from which they are excluded. In other words and in Asef Bayat’s words:

I would like to suggest that marginality may not just be a curse; it can and does serve also as an opportunity – a space where those who cannot afford the cost of the ‘normal’ and the mainstream can survive and thrive. Thus, a marginal position may not be simply a state of powerlessness; it can provide a space for alternative norms and lives, a place of respite and counter-power, for the very excluded and self-excluded. In this conceptualization, the term ‘marginals’ does not simply refer to the poor and working classes; the economically well off and people of prestige may also experience a state of marginality. (Bayat 2012: 14-15).

What Bayat argues is reflecting the collective practices of *Ramlet Bulaq* residents when they changed their tactics in confronting the authorities. Their resistance can be understood in terms of Bush and Ayeb is a product of social-class mobilization against political authoritarianism and signifies the power of many marginalized groups that is a product of neoliberal ideology (Bush& Ayeb 2012: 4). So understanding marginality as part of social groups is important as they are categories of people who have been pushed to the periphery of economic growth political development (Bush& Ayeb 2012: 7).

In *Ramlet Bulaq*; there are so many levels of marginalization. Whether ones that are considered being a defeat; others are anchors of power and strength. Some are on

the group level and some are on the individual level. From the macro scale; the hundreds of families who are living in *Ramlet Bulaq* considered to be firstly marginalized by labeling the area an informal settlement by the government and the Informal Settlements Development Fund (ISDF) unit. Since this unit was formed in 2008 as I explained before and the researches done and labeled hundreds of area around Egypt with this label of being so called informal. This label neither affects the residents' life nor changes their everyday in the first couple of years, but after the official governmental announcement that was released in June 2012 in the official newspaper that allow the government to take the land of *Ramlet Bulaq*; their everyday changed. Their everyday life details changed in terms of going to courts, and try to understand their legal situation. Moreover to relate the accident that happened in August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 to the wanted evacuation that would benefit the government and the Nile City Towers administration. The residents had to understand and ask about the mission of the Informal Settlements Development Fund and Cairo governor responsibilities and who the people are responsible about their issue. Moreover, they suddenly found their area. Their land and their houses are labeled as being informal; one of the women suddenly asked me "Why are we informal? I was born here, I know that I am poor but what about this informal thing the government is talking about?" (Khalil 2014).<sup>58</sup>

The question of the woman will take us to another aspect of marginalization that is the class one. Since the Nile City Towers were build; the residents in *Ramlet Bulaq* discovered another level of being rich; which causes them to feel poorer. One of the residents told me:

Can you imagine that I am daily seeing employees in the Towers who own cars and seem that they are getting too much money. I was entering the Towers very afraid of everything? I was even afraid to touch anything. And that night club they have that is called *Tamaray*, you cannot imagine the people we are seeing daily entering and getting out of this club. People are getting out drunk, couples, kissing each other and holding alcohol bottles in their hands. They look at us while giving them their keys for their cars after parking and give me whatever 30 to 100 Egyptian pounds. That is normal, they are drunk and they are not aware of anything. What should I feel and I am seeing people who are spending money like this. The ticket to get into this

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<sup>58</sup> Personal Interview with a woman. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

night club would feed a family in *Ramlet Bulaq* for a week! (Khalil 2014).<sup>59</sup>

This level of marginalization is class based, and it never makes the families feel stronger in anything. The man continued his sayings:

You know; this night club is making too much noise. Every night to the morning; they display music in a very loud voice to the degree that the area is all shaking out of their vibrate music. We did complaint to the police station of *Bulaq* to ask them to finish early but no one did anything for us and why after the death of *Amr El-Boni*, when the Prime Minister *Hesham Kandil* came here, he checked on the Nile City Towers and the door that was broken and the two burnt cars. Why did not he come to us? Why he did not ask about the dead body and the injured people from *Ramlet Bulaq*? Are not we Egyptians as they are? Are not we citizens in this country as they are? (Khalil 2014)<sup>60</sup>

In the last sentences, three different informants were speaking. Their sound in saying this was shaky and they felt they are second or third class citizens. They felt how much they are marginalized because no one from the government asked them what happened and who killed who?

Can you imagine that the old people in here, they never lived happily. They are always suffering. And when the government was about to turn to be a Muslim Brotherhood one; I was happy I thought they would make services for the poor; I thought our life would have a difference. Then I found them in the same side of the classy rich people. People here have no services, we do not have water, infrastructure and even the electricity we are taking it from one house to another, and it is not legal. Why would not they provide us with the main services that we need? People are here since 1914 and 1920 (Khalil 2014).<sup>61</sup>

Another level of marginalization is that that is gender based. The gender based issues have many stories. In May 2013, and after the march happened on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013; and then the meeting with the municipalities, the head of the district asked for a meeting with the representatives after the counting of families finished. The families asked me to attend the meeting with them as they consider me the architect who is

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<sup>59</sup> Personal Interview with a man. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

responsible of any technical decision in the area. So I asked who will attend the meeting, they mentioned the names of 3 to 4 men in the area. There are a couple of women in the area who are always active and they even lead the marches and the chants; in addition to their presence always in the court so I asked why any of them would attend the meeting with us and the reply was:

No, women do not attend the meeting, they wear black dresses and they do not know how to talk probably. They shout and say inappropriate words easily and they will not know how to deal in a good formal behavior with the head of the district (Khalil 2014).<sup>62</sup>

I did not give up and I asked the women if they want to attend and they refused saying that this is a men's meeting and that I as a woman is representing them.

Another level of marginalization based on gender happened when the employees were counting the families. The families asked me to rewrite what the employees are writing; on one hand we have a parallel counting to the number of families and on the other hand that my watching over the employees would make them afraid to falsify the counting. While walking with the male employee who was dealing better with the male member of families; moreover sometimes he did not want to register the single woman and sometimes he refused to register their sons who are arrested. The things I observed and most of the women talk about was his sexual harassment looks towards the women; while he was talking to them and asking about their names, ages and asking for their national identity, he was not looking to their faces but to their breasts.

In the same days with the employee, the households that were led by men; they marginalized their wives in purpose in front of the employee; for example, the employee is asking for the national identities, so the man give his identity and says the house is mine or the rent is by my name. So the employee says we need both identities and especially hers as the wife is carrying the family identity not the man.

#### **5.6. The everyday of residence in *Ramlet Bulaq*:**

The everyday notion was significant in this research to understand the people's lives. Those people are the ones who make the space; they created each single street, yard, plaza, house and room. After all the questions, visits and interviews I conducted in *Ramlet Bulaq*; it was somehow more understandable what was significant in their

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<sup>62</sup> Personal Interview with A'm Gaber. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

everyday life and how it changes in different periods of time. The main periods that I choose as significant ones are: before the construction of the Nile City Towers; after the construction of the Nile city Towers and before January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Egyptian revolution; After January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 revolution and before the accident of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 and after the accident of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012.

Before the construction of the Nile City Towers; the everyday of a worker in the workshop that was in front of *Ramlet Bulaq* family was getting up in the morning, have breakfast then walk to his work space that is 3 to 4 minutes walking-distance. In the lunch hour he would go back home to have lunch with his family then go back again to work. After he finishes his work; he would change his clothes at home and meet his friends in the garden in front of the Nile enjoying the weather and his family would join to play around him with other children and women to chat and so on. For another women who were working in the plaza in front of *Ramlet Bulaq*; their everyday life was about getting up early, preparing the food and then taking her carriage to stand in the plaza, men, women and children keep coming and going to buy their food. In the middle of the day she would go back home to get more food and then continue to the evening time selling her food; then she would go back home to sit with her family and husband. What I just said it is a too romanticized picture and seems as an easy and comfortable way of living. And as I mentioned previously that for sure there are lots of negative and uneasy things that were happening in their life before the construction of The Nile City Towers and for sure they are ignoring those things now as they are just analyzing the recent source of their headache.

For the same two persons, after the construction of the Nile City Towers, for him; he did lose his nearby job. He had to go one day to *Souq El-Aasr*; another day he would stay in any garden waiting with the construction workers to get a daily job with a few pounds in return, then another 3 days he may have work again in *Souq El-Aasr*. He never goes back home to have lunch with this family and from time to time he can sit with his friends inside the walls of *Ramlet Bulaq* because there is no garden outside anymore. For the woman; she lost her work space; so she had to use her house and her small kitchen as a space for cooking and selling in the same time.

After the construction of the Nile City Towers, and after January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 revolution and before the accident of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012, the man mostly left whatever he was doing and turned to be a security man for the Nile City Towers. He wakes up by afternoon to do nothing but chatting with other men in the area and walk here and

there around the Towers feeling helpless, as there is nothing official to do, then he goes back home to watch television then taking another round of walking around *Ramlet Bulaq* again as if he is a security. For the woman, she got a job as a cleaner in the Nile City Towers; so she wakes up early go to the Towers to take her shift in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, floor in the mall. She worked as a cleaner to the bathrooms. After she finished by 5 in the evening, she goes back home and then maybe she sits in front of her house catching stories with other women and then go to sleep for the next day mission.

After the accident of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012, the man lost his job in the Nile City Towers so he has nothing to do but try to go back to his old job which was not something permanent. So he keeps trying to work and even the money he got is not enough anymore as everything got higher prices; moreover he was getting very good money from the Towers or maybe he is in jail and if not he is trying to protect his being of not being arrest for any reseasons. For the woman; she got back to her old daily rhythm of walking; cooking and selling food to children and others, but she decided to stop working by the noon, as she is getting old and she cannot cook twice a day anymore.



## 6. Chapter Six

### The How in *Ramlet Bulaq*

#### 6.1. Introduction:

I will start my conclusion as I started in chapter one; as while I was walking in alleys in *Ramlet Bulaq*, a young 11 years-old girl was playing in front of her house with other children of her age. She stopped me and said, “Do you know Amr? The man who was killed, he used to get us candies; they said he was a criminal but he was not. He was angry because of Ahmed’s death” That was a girl’s description of her relationship to the young man who was killed on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 in *Ramlet Bulaq*, Cairo (Khalil, 2013).<sup>63</sup>

And as I said before the story was not about me, the girl or even Amr. It is a story about a group of people who decided to make their space and to inscribe their presence through their practices and being in place. The girl and Amr El-Boni were the first strings to guide me to a place where there are so many stories in the background.

#### 6.2. Why Ramlet Boulaq:

Engaging with the *Ramlet Bulaq* case came by coincidence as a phone call from a friend: “Omnia, did you have an interview in the Television? People in Ramlet Bulaq claimed you talked about the informal settlements “Ashwa’yat” and they want to talk to you about their case, please do.” This was on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

As I already elaborated in the previous chapters, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 by midday, breaking news announced that a massive fight arose between the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* and the private security guards inside the Nile City Towers. Amr El Boni was killed and many others injured. By August 6<sup>th</sup> I wrote an article<sup>64</sup>, trying to explain what happened in *Ramlet Bulaq*. I argued that Ministry of Interior, other government agents and Nile City Towers Company who reside in the adjacent Nile Towers to *Ramlet Bulaq* were kicking the residents out, and so they can put their hands on the land, which is highly priced. Moreover, as I already explained in the previous chapters; an official agreement published in the Official newspaper *Al Wakae’ Al Masreya* (The Egyptian Gazette), June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012 (Figure 9&10)<sup>65</sup> declared that the

<sup>63</sup> Khalil, Omnia. April 2013. An interview with a young girl in Ramlet Bulaq, Cairo, Egypt

<sup>64</sup> The author, August 2012. [http://revsoc.me/\\_16515](http://revsoc.me/_16515)

<sup>65</sup> Adel, Malek & Adel, Mohamed. August 2012. "Ramlet Bulaq, Who is the murderer? and who is the victim?" ECSEER- Egyptian center for Social and Economic Rights. <http://ecsesr.com/report/5321>

government would legally take over the land. It seemed to be a step in implementation of Cairo 2050 master plan<sup>66</sup>.



Figure 9<sup>67</sup>



Figure 10<sup>68</sup>

I visited the area, and residents were in sorrow after 52 young men were detained in August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 after the clashes. The first person I met in *Ramlet Bulaq* was the head of the popular local committee<sup>69</sup>. I had conducted several interviews, but they were just talking about the death of *Amr El-Boni* and the day of the accident of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012; moreover most of them thought I may help in getting the detainees

<sup>66</sup> Cairo 2050 project is a governmental master plan that visioning how Cairo should looks like in 2050, it contains many skyscrapers and investment projects; those projects visions are to take place on the lands of the informal settlements.

<sup>67</sup> Figure 10, Ramlet Bulaq's map, as an unsafe area that classified by ISDF.

<sup>68</sup> Figure 10, Official newspaper Al Wakae' Al Masreya, June 20th, 2012

<sup>69</sup> Popular committees formed in Egypt in the 18<sup>th</sup> days after January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011. It is groups of young men who usually guarded their local neighborhoods. And after Mubarak stepped down, those committees continued working as local municipalities to take care of local issues and problems.

out of prison, who were arrested after the clashes between the police and the residents after *Amr* was killed. I decided to make a short documentary to raise the right to housing issues, to make a statement against the oppressive violence, to advocate for the detainees' release, and to provide the larger context about the land ownership issue, and the indirect forced evictions the residents are facing. But I did not continue, as I could not interview any of the security guards inside the towers, or the head of the informal settlement development fund (ISDF). Consequently, I kept following the official news, the popular committee efforts, and *Ahyaa' Bel Esm Faqat*<sup>70</sup> campaign.

While I was visiting the area during September 2012, as an architect, the question for me was “What happened? Why is the government so oppressive in dealing with the residents?” Then by the beginning of March, 2013 one of the residents called telling me that there is a development master plan envisioned by Informal Settlements Development Fund and the municipality in Cairo (Figure 11 &12). They asked me about my opinion regarding this project. The project details were published in one newspaper (Freedom and Justice) “*El-Horreya Wal-Adala*”; that is the Muslim brotherhood party and was by then the ruling government party. The project was about building 4 towers in the North part of *Ramlet Bulaq* in order to displace the families in and the sell the rest of the land (El-Horreya Wal-Adala, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013).<sup>71</sup> April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013, some of *Ramlet Bulaq*'s residents with the collaboration of activists organized a march that started from *Ramlet Bulaq* to *Maspero* building (Official media and television governmental building) in order to demand governmental transparency regarding the project, in addition to demanding freedom of the detainees who were imprisoned after August 2012. Consequently, Cairo governor asked them for a meeting and the municipalities decided to survey and count the families in the area in order to know how many flats are required to resettle the families after the evacuation process (Figure 13). To reach a deal with the municipalities to count the families was a successful in itself; but the issue that emplaning the families in flats is nothing relate to their culture specifies and their life style. No one from the government studies their social behavior and/or analyzes their houses and how they built; to understand what and of houses do they need. For example about two hundred families who are living adjunct the railways are having

<sup>70</sup> The campaign “Just Alive by Name” or *Ahyaa' Bel Esm Faqat* is group of young activists who work with people in different areas within Egypt regarding housing, public health and work rights.

<sup>71</sup> El Horreya Wal Adala newspaper. Issue 500. March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013

animals in their houses; so each of them has a room like a barn beside or behind their houses and/or rooms. A woman in *Ramlet Bulaq* asked me once after I was explaining the project that was proposed by the government that are 4 towers; each tower is 9 to 10 floors, so she asked “Omnia, what does it mean to live in the ninth floor?”. Her question was very important; she never witnessed living in the ninth floor and she cannot imagine how she can do this. So the government already had a model of emplacing families without even understanding the need of those families. As James Scott mentioned that the state always has a fear from the people who are moving around, squatters, homeless people and any kind of mobile people. The state is always trying to standardize and modelize the living of the citizens so they will be easier in governing and controlling (Scott 1998: 2). The government turned the problem in *Ramlet Bulaq* to be figures and numbers and the question of the rights to city turned to be about census and how many families are living there and so on (Scott 1998:2). The government turned off any responsibilities from its side to understand the complexity of a group of people. And what I am saying is clear in the next image about the project of development is about numbers (Figure 11).



Figure 11<sup>72</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Figure 11, El Horreya Wal Adala newspaper. Issue 500. March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013



Figure 12<sup>73</sup>

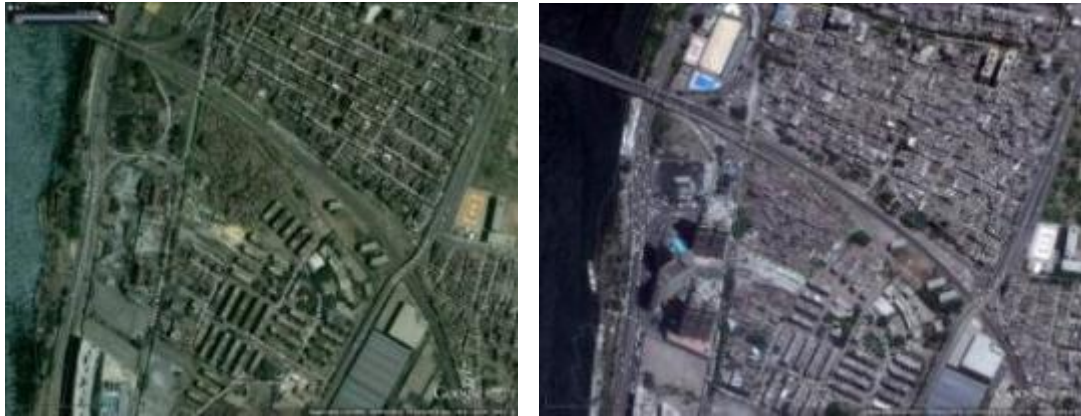


Figure 13<sup>74</sup> : *Ramlet Bulaq* in 2000 compared to 2012.

### 6.3.The March:

That day of the march was April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013 *Ramlet Bulaq* residents marched from their area to *Maspero* building demanding transparency for the development project that the government announced in the newspapers on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Ninety per cent of the demonstrators were women (figure 14&15); a question arose in my mind “why are all of these women participating? Is the issue of land more important for them? Is it because men are at work? Or is it because they have more time to participate? Or is their relationship to the space different than men?” I did not find answers to those questions, and once in *Ramlet Bulaq* in an informal discussion between me and one woman she claimed that men are doing nothing in the area; and they just appear in the official meetings but otherwise the women are the dynamic force and the moving energy in *Ramlet Bulaq*. But besides I did not stop questioning

<sup>73</sup> Figure 12: Layout of the proposed project

<sup>74</sup> Figure 13: *Ramlet Bulaq* satellite map. Source: Google Earth

other things I was seeing all the time. But that day and because of these numbers of women; I decided to lead the chants instead of the other men who were there. And actually the women's response was positive and they told me yes please continue leading the chants; you are just a women like us. I know that I did not problematize gender here in this research, though it is for sure used as a category of analysis. I mentioned how gender in relation to space and development differ in *Nessma's* story; the woman who killed in a car accident after her act preventively to the Nile Towers administration, moreover she sued them and the government to keep her kiosk as it is. I am not assuming here that women are the subjects who constitute the space but as I just mentioned that their movement and mobilization to the rest of the gendered subjects is important in the area. Earlier in the previous chapters; I asserted how the women want to be in the area and continue living in *Ramlet Bulaq* more than the men; and that is why they trusted my attendance to the official meetings with the municipalities; as they knew that I would negotiate for the staying not for the selling to the land. Gender is a factor in the relation to space; as I explained before regarding how women are using the different spaces in different ways and how they use it for their laboring whether they are working on it or even sitting to practice their everyday activities of talking, take care of their children and cooking. I see women as part of the potentiality I talk about in the previous chapter.



Figure 14<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Figure 14: A shot of April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013 march. Source: Facebook page



Figure 15<sup>76</sup>

#### 6.4.Counting: the Survey Journey:

This process of counting the families was important in my relationship to the families in the area; some of the families already memorize my face from the march, so whenever someone of them see me in the area he or she asked me how am I doing and thank me for the support I showed that day as I blocked the cars with my body when they decided to block the road. Back to the journey of the 7 days to survey and counting the families; as I was walking behind the employee holding a notebook and a pen in my hands and I concentrated too much not to miss anything he would write in his papers. Before this experience, I heard a lot about the corruption that always happens in the counting process, thus, that is why I concentrated that much.

Since day one the dynamics between me and the employee were strange as he thought I am working in one of the non-governmental organizations, so he had a suspicion about me and also a kind of fear as there is a reputation for the non-governmental organizations of getting money from outside Egypt and then to announce scandals about Egypt that destroy Egypt's reputation. In the middle of the day he asked me "Are you from Bulaq?" as he noticed that most of people are greeting me and they already knew me and they welcome my entry to their houses.

<sup>76</sup> Figure 15: A shot of April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013 march. Source: Al-Youm Al-Sabea'a online journal.

By the end of that day one; he knew that I am an architect and he was surprised with me insising to visits each family, each room and each house.

While we were knocking all the doors in *Ramlet Bulaq*, I had too many observations and I did my best to memorize most of them. One of them was that there was a police officer who was accompanying us in the first two days; the power dynamics in some houses between the police officer and the women in houses were strange and left lots of question marks in my mind, but later on I discovered that when someone arrested in the area; some women go to the police station and they have some kind of relations with the officers in the police station. So women had the capability to get those temporary arrested out of the police station. I met drug dealers, sex workers and other people who got paid in the revolution's different events to participate in the killing of other citizens. Another couple of Christian families marginalized in the area and left alone and no one even knows their names.

In the seven days new faces appeared whom I never saw. They were well dressed men in their middle ages who suddenly came to say that they own the houses and they are renting the rooms of the houses to different ladies and/or families. Another man who seem to be religious refused to deal with me and he was trying to get me out of the house but other residents insist of my presence. Later on I knew that the religious man is responsible in one of *Bulaq* mosques and he is distributing money every month in the area to certain families.

My last mentioning to all of those people is to show the complexity and the differentiation of people who are living in the area and some of them are actually do not live there. As beside my research question that I will talk about in the next few pages and the analysis of the How in *Ramlet Bulaq*; I am clarifying that my argument in this thesis is not just about advocating the existence of the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* because they are good people and/or poor people. No; my argument in this thesis is not about judgment of what people are doing and/or who they are or what morals they do have. My position as an urban anthropologist is and will be to defend their existence regardless of any complexity I observed in the area. Moreover, that part of the social science project is to understand the social phenomenon through unpacking it regarding the mess we unravel in the process that John Law talked about in his book "After Methods". And huge part of what and how the complexity of the residents composed is depending on the history of the area in which I already explained in chapter two, three, four and five. The power dynamics in the area are



extremely observed and being in one house gives a message to the other houses. I am asserting I am unraveling how this community became shaped and what formed the power dynamics in the space.

### **6.5.Conclusion:**

My research question is about the relationship between labor and space, particularly how people constitute themselves in place by what they are doing, i.e. 'laboring'. *Ramlet Bulaq* as a space and the transformations that happened occasioned shifts in people's practices of laboring. Moreover, laboring comprises the pretext of their strategies and tools in coping, adapting and fighting back. I conceptualize laboring at the heart of political and social relations of power that produce the space of *Ramlet Boulaq* and shape the making of the people of *Ramlet Bulaq*. And in chapter four I explained and unpacked the everyday life in different periods in *Ramlet Bulaq*; it is clear how the implementation of the Nile City Towers affected the lives of the residents; on their different gender, ages, specialization and whatever they are doing. Most of them changed what they are doing; and by using the phrase of what they are doing; I mean all the activities anyone in *Ramlet Bulaq* may do to live. Beginning with how they access the area as they were sometimes prevented to use the main entrance because the night club's entrance was separated. Moving to how many hundreds had to change their daily job and even they had to learn new skills in order to change their jobs and their sources of living.

Their relation to the space changed and it became different and I may describe it with destructive as Harvey described the neoliberal policies as destructive; because of the building of the Nile City Towers. Lots of families left the area; whether on the one hand they left thinking that they are upgrading their economic class so they moved to other areas in flats. Or on the other hand they moved because they do not have jobs anymore in the area. And with the latter what I mean is that their jobs constituted their relation to the space that is *Ramlet Bulaq*.

Several accidents caused some traumas to the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* and made them feel that they worth nothing to whoever in power; whether the people who are representing Capital and/or others in authorities in the government. First trauma was the killing of *Nessma* that symbolized the resistance and its consequences. Second is the fire that happened in that house in July 2012 and 4 years-old child died; in this accident the Towers administration refused to provide them with water to put

off the fire that burnt a number of houses. Third is the accident of killing *Amr El-Boni* and the detained men who were all whether beaten or injured.

In the minute I am writing this thesis that is February 2014; the residents are broken mentally as two weeks ago the judgment declared the release of 22 detainees and the other 29 were charged between seven to twenty five years in prison. And already there is a one who died in the prison 8 months ago due to his medical condition. The man who died was a 52 years-old man; he was not from *Ramlet Bulaq*, he was from *Wekalet El Balah* and they arrested him after the accident as he was sitting with a group of people in *Ramlet Bulaq*. People in *Ramlet Bulaq* felt so helpless in the last two weeks; *Amr El-Boni* died and no one was charged for his death, and the other men who were jailed were punished for the rest of their lives. Besides that those 22 released persons were massively and brutally punished in the prison and once they released them; they took them to the police station of *Bulaq* and beat and tortured them again.

A part of the research inquiry was about how the residents in *Ramlet Bulaq* changed their strategies and techniques to deal with their situation, here I cannot separate their changing in tactics of January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 revolution as an event, as it affected the whole society. Before the revolution of 2011, there were groups who started striking or marching and mostly were group of workers who had certain demands, but after January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 the striking, marching and demonstrations became a legitimized social tool for everyone. The success after the 18 days of striking and bringing *Mubarak* to step down; became a tool for people trying to reach their demands in a wider spectrum in Egypt.

In the preparation for the march of April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013 that was a Sunday. We had two options whether to march to the Cairo Governor's building in *Abdeen* district or to the Prime Minister's building in *El-Kasr El-Eynee* Street. The problem is that on the same day other residents from *Dewee'qa* had a demonstration in front of the Cairo governor's building; so we had to march to the Prime Minister's building; but we were afraid as the area has too many walls that were built by the military forces and the central security forces in order to prevent any clashes in front of the Ministry of Interior that is located in the same area. So to reach the building is not an easy mission plus the media and other people who may pass by will not know anything about the march. Friday night that was April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013, I received a phone call from

*A'm Gaber* who is one of the residents and who is an active member in the local popular committee saying:

Omnia, I want to ask you about your opinion in something. Can we march to *Maspero* building (That is the official Media, Television and Radio governmental building)? Since if we want people to hear us and know about our problem, we should march to the media building, so they will come down to us. Right?

I was surprised by his suggestion as the week before he was negotiating that we do not want to block the roads with our crowd and we should be quiet in our march and we should not make problems in the streets. His discourse about the crowd and not to block the streets so we do not affect the production was a known discourse at that time; it was used by the government and the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) to convince the people of the necessity that we should stop striking and demonstrating; and we should continue working for the sake of the production to build the country. And that is why I was surprised by his changing in position in two days. And for sure I agreed and I said sure you have logic in what you are saying and we changed the invitation to be a march from *Ramlet Bulaq* to *Maspero* Building.

*“The land is ours,  
Inherited from fathers and grandfathers,  
And tomorrow and the day after tomorrow,  
It will be for our children,  
And the price of the land is our blood.”*

This was one of the chants we had in the march expressing their objection to be forcedly evicted out of *Ramlet Bulaq*. Interestingly enough, after we arrived to *Maspero* building, the women decided to block the road and no one could stop them from doing this; even the man who was objecting to the idea of blocking the roads.

The strategy of the residents changed in this point as they felt how strong they are in this moment. After they saw how many channels and journalists turned to them and asked them to record with them or write about their case. Moreover they witnessed the response of the police and the municipalities; and how they asked them for an official meeting immediately after the march.

In the same month, one of the charity organizations that called *Nehlam b bukra* (We dream for tomorrow) visited *Ramlet Bulaq* and they decided to provide them with a water network. So the organization paid all the fees to do the network; and the families decided to make a collective effort of collecting money to buy two water pumps to get higher pressured water from the main street and push it into the new water network. It was kind of a collective work and while I visited the area they asked me about my opinion in the network and the technicalities.

Those kind of initiatives made in *Ramlet Bulaq* were inspiring and they made them feel that they have power to work together and to achieve lots of things towards another stage of their efforts to get their rights even if they made it by themselves. “We always do everything by ourselves, we built the houses and we will continue develop our place” (Khalil 2013).<sup>77</sup> This phrase was by one of the young resident who was totally feeling empowered to continue whatever he started collectively with the other residents.

The following months after the march that was the rest of 2013; the issues of *Ramlet Bulaq* kept on in the news. Lots of interviews, media and journalists visited the area to talk and interview different residents and asking them about their demands and so on. I even found that the residents are having meetings all the time; to agree about the discourse they would use in front of the strangers. They had a deal to raise the two issues, the land issue and the detainees’ problem. Their mobilization created different discourses and made their cases publically known in the local and the international media and newspapers. They asked me sometimes to attend some interviews to translate to and from English as they claimed their trust in me; they knew that I would not change anything of what they were saying.

I was surprised of their energy but I learned how the mobilization happened and how to connect to residents in one area and not to depend on one family as the source of information. I witnessed how much they do love whoever is helping and how much they totally understand the people who are approaching them from the government and they had the talent and the experience to deal with them.

Again and back to the research inquiry that is to understand the relationship between labor and space, particularly how people constitute themselves in place by what they are doing, i.e. ‘laboring’; which I already unpacked in the last chapter.

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<sup>77</sup> Personal Interview. January, 2014 in *Ramlet Bulaq*.

Regarding the other part of the inquiry that was “*Ramlet Bulaq* as a space and the transformations happened occasioned shift in people’s practices of laboring; moreover it influenced their strategies and tools in coping, adapting and/or fighting the internal and external tensions that represent political and social powers in relation to their place.” I can see how people in *Ramlet Bulaq* differently sometimes cope and otherwise fight with all the existing powers in order to reach their rights and achieve their demands. I know that a breaking point happened with the cruel judgment for the young men to be sentenced all those years in jail. All the violence that was practiced by the government and the capital to the residents is not to be forgiven and even after they won the case of the land; but that does not mean that they do not face a threat of forced eviction anytime under any cause by the government and the municipalities. As I started with *Amr El-Boni* who is now resting in peace; I do believe that if anyone should be punished in such a case, it would to be the unjust situation that was caused by the government in the last decades; and to the current regime that never punishes the true criminal and is always replacing them with other criminals who are the victims of the system, not the thugs of it.

Despite being an engaged researcher and an architect, my role is not about advocacy or representing the residents of the area to the public.

Anthropology is part of the world it studies” and “Placing the anthropologist within the same frame of reference as the subjects of anthropology through responding to the changing nature of anthropology inside and outside the academy (Moore 2000: 19).

*Hesham Kandil’s* government (the prime minister in the period between August 2012 and June 2013) was following the same urban policies agenda that *Mubarak’s* regime followed. Although the terms of before and after the revolution of January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011 is not analytically valid, it is truly varied in the strategies and tools people use in dealing with power. Slums’ (*Ashwa’yat*) residents face issues in the matter of representation and agency; who speaks for them? And who is responsible to represent them in the government? Especially, *Ramlet Bulaq* residents are labeled as criminals after the accident of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012; as the media portrayed them as the thugs who blocked the road; torched the employees’ cars and threw stones in order to break the towers elevation’s glass. Residents in *Ramlet Bulaq* changed their tactics, strategies and actions in order to gain more legitimate social and political status.

The story of the people in *Ramlet Bulaq* is one of its first regarding their resistance in the struggle with the government and how they sue them and how they mobilized to gain the right to stay in the area. Their case study is important, as it is significant in the struggle of the so-called informal settlement residents. And those marginalized residents can get their rights to their place.

In this thesis; I used the conceptual framework of different concepts that came by Deleuze, Foucault and Law, I used their concepts as interlockers to unpack the events and the everyday life in *Ramlet Bulaq*; Foucault and his concept of power, that we have power in each kind of relation, we saw how power dynamics are constituted and how it affects everything. I talked about the different factors which changed lots of things in the everyday life of the residents' and took a distance to look and understand how the things are happening in *Ramlet Bulaq*. Deleuze and the tree and its roots in understanding the regime and replacing it with the grass that has no roots and how things are not about cause and affect but it varies between so many different causes; it is about the multiplicities interlocking in the same plane. I elaborated the mess in the social phenomena which John Law talked about; the mess in doing the research and the mess in structuring the data and analyzing it. Besides; what is the relation between the individual and the community? How each individual in *Ramlet Bulaq* is doing something that is changing the collective in the area? Again I am quoting Zizek "In Kierkegaard's terms, a revolutionary process is not a gradual progress but a repetitive movement, a movement of repeating the beginning, again and again." (Zizek 2009: 45). Which was clear between what *Nessam* started, then *Amr* did and then the collective do it together.

This research is a contribution as a social science project that analytically unpack the complexity of different agents in a social science phenomenon that is a story of a group of people who are the residents in *Ramlet Bulaq* that are staying in the same place and struggling in their existence and their everyday life in getting the rights to practice the very simple right of staying safely in their houses in the area where they born. And politically the residents of *Ramlet Bulaq* are giving a message to the government that they have their right to practice their life on this piece of land without interruptions from the state and/or the capital.

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