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Whose Downtown is it Anyway?  
The Urban Transformation of Downtown Cairo between State and  
Non-State Stakeholders

**Masters Thesis submitted to  
The Department of Sustainable Development  
The American University in Cairo**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Masters of Science in Sustainable Development**

By  
Hajer Awatta

Under the Supervision of  
Dr. Khaled Abdelhalim,  
Dr. Mona Abaza  
May 2015

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how the influential state and non-state stakeholders interact, conflict and collectively shape the urban transformation of downtown Cairo. The stakeholder analysis revealed interesting positions and power levels of the influential stakeholders impacting urban transformation in downtown. It also illustrated alliances and dependencies between entities within the same stakeholder group and between state and non-state stakeholders. Collaborations between influential stakeholders in the private sector interested in establishing lobby groups to further their interests in downtown. Despite the commonalities between the interests of the state and private investors, the state prefers to maintain development monopoly and control over the area in its beautification-focused development efforts. Influential stakeholders who do not have particular interest in the development of downtown, such as legislative authorities and large financial institutions, whose power and influence can be tapped into and directed towards a more sustainable transformation of the area. The thesis findings revealed that the ingredients of gentrification are present in downtown however it is currently inhibited by legislative and other parameters. This brings up the question as to how the state is planning on regulating potential urban transformation in downtown Cairo in the current stakeholder power dynamics to minimize negative socioeconomic impacts. A clear comprehensive vision for the development of downtown can only be successfully implemented through the buy-in of *all* stakeholder groups.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Research Problem

Cairo, similar to many mega cities, strives to transform itself into a global city; one that is economically sturdy, culturally vibrant, and able to compete with cities in the region to attract skilled people as well as international and domestic investors (Salama, 2009). Downtown Cairo is experiencing an urban transformation guided in part by neoliberal globalization, state securitization, capitalist investment interests and the emergence of an independent culture/arts scene. Such transformations in other cities resulted in negative socioeconomic impacts on the low- and mid-income individuals who live/work in the city core (Sassen 1991). Looking at the impact of globalization on Cairo, Vignal and Denis argue that despite not following the traditional trajectory of a “global city” in regards to the impact on specific industries, globalization’s impact on the built environment is resulting in increased social inequality, privatization and “elitist modes of consumption” (2006, p. 15). State and non-state stakeholders share the responsibility of this reality.

Redeveloping highly significant and contested areas such as city centers create conflict between local forces as each have their own goals and desired vision for downtown. Theoretically the state is the protector of the “public good”, however it is often ambiguous to define what is in the interest of the general public. In the case of downtown development is it attracting private investments to create jobs and support the economy, promoting a cultural scene to increase the public’s access to such spaces in the city center, protecting small businesses and mid-income residents from potential gentrification and ouster from downtown, or is it to detract downtown as a major space of public dissent and protest to increase political stability and security? This is where the

issue of sustainable urban development and social inclusivity arise.

These different development interests – between public and private, capitalist and cultural – all attempting to implement their version of the “best” development model for the city (Salama, 2009, p. 3) at times overlap and support each other, despite their apparent conflict of interests, or the opposite. This research aims to examine the agendas of the different influential stakeholders impacting the urban transformation in downtown today and highlight the dynamics between them. This understanding is imperative if a comprehensive, socially-inclusive and sustainable downtown is to be developed.

## **Background**

Downtown Cairo has been experiencing a significant deterioration over the past several decades, with businesses and residents alike fleeing towards newly-developed urban fringes if they can afford it. As such, developing downtown is seen by the state as one of the gateways to rebranding Cairo. In many developed countries, market forces gear urban transformation due to globalization, with the state taking the role of the facilitator through legislation and land use permits. Urban development in mega cities in developing countries, on the other hand, is often a “national project” planned and sometimes even executed by the state with the collaboration of the private sector (Salama, 2009, p. 45). In Egypt, the most recent example would be the newly announced Capital City, which is to be built 60 kilometers (kms) from Cairo in partnership with a major Emirati real estate developer, In Mexico City, the city center was developed in the early 2000s as a result of a partnership between the city administration and major local businesses (Davis, 2013, p. 54).

Over the past decade, state institutions have shown interest in the revitalization of the city center through sponsoring international design competitions and developing strategic urban development vision for the city as a whole. The 2011 revolution was unexpected by all and created a pause, albeit short-lived, in the state's development vision for the city. A brief detraction of the state in the following months created a security vacuum which resulted in increased public sense of ownership and informal usages of space, with Tahrir Square becoming "de facto the space for contestation, for grieving, and public performance" (Abaza, 2014, p. 9). The state gradually regained its presence in the public sphere and in August 2014 the Cairo governorate took heavy security measures to remove all the unlicensed street vendors in downtown and a large media campaign was launched to declare state plans to 'revitalize' Khedival downtown and bring it back to its "lost glory" and reclaim the sense of security and control of the urban space, particularly with the state's declared "war on terrorism".

Concurrently, the increased flow of Arab capital into Egypt since the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 coupled with the decreasing role of the state in urban development compared to the socialist ideology of the 1950s and 1960s impacted investments and the urban form in Cairo as a whole, with urban developments tailored to touristic and elitist consumption (Abaza, 2001). Consequently, downtown Cairo started to be seen by some investors as an undiscovered gem for real estate investments, with private investors purchasing prime real estate and iconic buildings in downtown.

Downtown Cairo has always been a mecca for cultural and arts enthusiasts, with hubs such as Café Riche, Groppi and other establishments that were a second home to many renowned artists, filmmakers and writers throughout the twentieth century. Artists and art

enthusiasts were restricted to specific known establishments, however over the past fifteen years, a plethora of alternative art galleries and cultural spaces emerged in downtown Cairo. These were not only limited to traditional ground level spaces, but also seeped into upper levels in residential buildings and other untraditional spaces such as warehouses as is the case with Townhouse Gallery's Rawabet Theatre.

The above stakeholders can be viewed as external, non-local forces directly and indirectly shaping downtown's built environment and social fabric, each with its own goals and desired vision for downtown Cairo. In other cities, the conglomeration of art-based and entertainment activities in an urban quarter had indirect impacts on the urban and social form, for instance, arts and the creative types have been supported by private real estate investors as a tool to gentrify areas and make them more attractive to higher-income residents and extract monopoly rents (Harvey, 2001). In the case of Cairo, private investors sponsorship of cultural and arts spaces is examined in this research.

### **Justification of Thesis**

I selected downtown for my area of research for its very drastic urban and social evolution since its establishment in the late 1880s. Downtown Cairo has always been of significance to many Egyptians whether they resided in Cairo or not, acting as an essential space for the political, cultural and commercial scenes in Egypt for decades. This significance increased exponentially since 2011 as downtown and Tahrir Square particularly gained national and international symbolic status for political expression and democracy. Many who rarely frequented downtown now hold a special relation with the space after the eighteen days of protest. This newly-gained sense of ownership and belonging may be threatened with the rebranding of downtown Cairo as a commercial

and cultural center, stripping away its social and political function if securitization and quartering of public space becomes part of the development agenda.

Globalization and the associated urban development has manifested in many cities with negative socioeconomic impacts, creating increased class stratification, gentrification and relocations of the most vulnerable in our cities. El-Sheshtawy describes one of these impacts on the urban space in the global south as “quartering of public space” – making public space less accessible to “unfavorable” segments of society to attract tourists and elites (2006, p. 237). This is already evident in the emergence of gated-communities, semi-public spaces such as malls and sporting clubs that regulate entry based on fitting into a certain socioeconomic strata (Abaza, 2001). This is in addition to many state-sponsored tourism development projects in Cairo that sanitize the public space of locals for the perceived comfort of tourists, such as the historic Al-Rifa’i Square (El Sadek 2011).

Literature and studies on globalization and its impact on urban development in the quest to create global cities is expansive (Sassen, 1991; Marcuse & Kempen, 2000; Stiglitz, 2002; and others), as well as the role of capitalist interests and that of the creative class in the development of downtown (Strom, 2008; Harvey, 2001). However, most – if not all – theories emanated from established global cities in developed countries whose transformation manifested itself to meet the pressing demands of globalization. This differs from Middle Eastern globalizing cities that apply western models of urban development that are detached from their local context in hopes of attracting global flows of capital (Salama, 2009).

This motivated urban researchers to take a closer look at Middle Eastern cities such as Dubai (Elsheshtawy, 2006), Beirut (Shwayri, 2002), and many examined Cairo's urban transformation from sociopolitical, urban, and cultural perspectives, such as Abaza (2011; 2014), Diane Singerman and Paul Ammar's collaborations with tens of experts in various fields in the two volumes, *Cairo Cosmopolitan* (2006) and *Cairo Contested* (2009), and many others. This is in addition to numerous dissertations on the transformation of Cairo's urban space, such as Hussam Salama (2009) and Fady El-Sadek (2011). These Cairo-centric urban analyses are vital in understanding the "city out of control" as David Sims calls it (2010), but still leave many aspects unexamined.

Beikart & Bayyat argue that the "neoliberal capitalist globalization" creates a neoliberal city of extremes that is saturated with its continuous quest for capital flows and modernity, with detrimental urban and social manifestations for the average city dweller struggling to assert his/her right to the city (2009, p. 817). This prompts the need for a deeper understanding of the forces shaping urban space in Cairo to better mitigate unwelcomed socioeconomic and political impacts on the public.

### **Research Objective**

In order to attempt to develop a socially-inclusive, investment-attractive urban transformation in Middle Eastern cities, one has to first understand the interests shaping the urban space in highly contested spaces such as downtown. The purpose of this study is to **examine how government plans, the interests of private investors, and the emerging cultural/entertainment scene in downtown Cairo interact, conflict and collectively shape the urban transformation of downtown Cairo.** The geographic area to be examined in the proposed research is in Cairo's 'belle époque' – the Khedive

Ismail's modern planning masterpiece. Figure 1 shows the area of study enclosed between three of downtown's main squares: Tahrir, Abdin, and Opera Squares, and 26<sup>th</sup> of July and Ramsis streets – an area known as a commercial, shopping and entertainment hub for many Egyptians. In order to reach this objective, this study will attempt to answer the following research questions:

- What are the current and proposed government development plans for downtown Cairo, and how would they impact downtown?
- How have the emerging arts, cultural and entertainment spaces in downtown impacted downtown, and using current trends what projections can be drawn about future impacts?
- How has private investment interests in downtown impacted downtown, and using current trends what projections can be drawn about future impacts?
- How do these three stakeholder groups' development and power agendas interact with each other, impacting the current and future urban transformation of downtown?

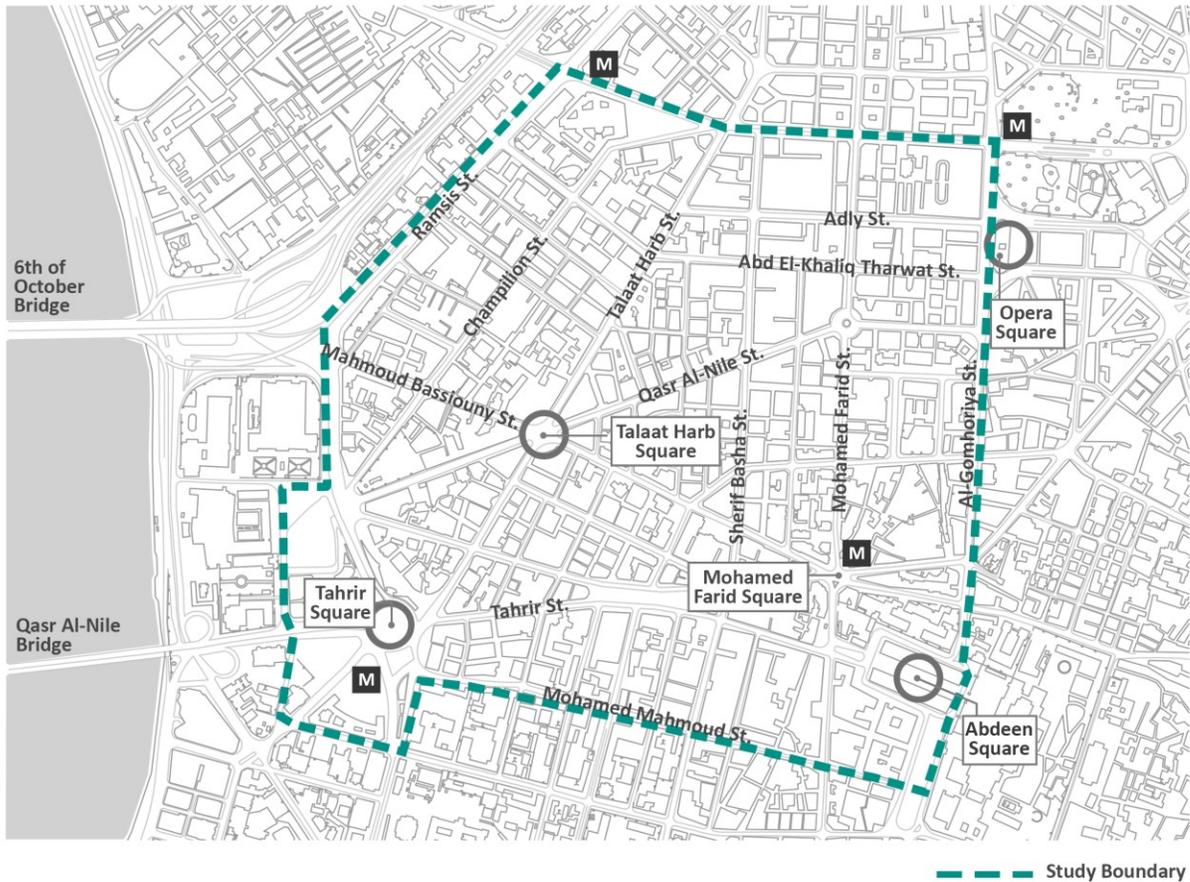


Figure 1: Downtown Khedival Cairo study area

## Methodology

The complex and exploratory nature of the proposed research dictates adopting a qualitative approach as the most logical option to unravel the different key players impacting the urban transformation of downtown Cairo. Qualitative research allows the development of an in-depth understanding of an issue, including subjective understandings, without requiring clear causal relations between the variables (stakeholders in this case) (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Stakeholder analysis was selected as the methodological framework for this research as it illustrates relationships and alliances between stakeholders and produces outcomes that can be used to guide

future policies and strategies to manage these stakeholders (Varavasovszky and Brugha, 2000).

### ***1.1.1. Conceptual Framework***

The thesis's main hypothesis is that understanding the relations and power dynamics between influential stakeholders impacting downtown's urban transformation can guide a more comprehensive urban development framework through extracting patterns and uncovering relations and alliances. That despite the impact the revolution had on downtown's urban and political space, the urban transformation of downtown started before the 2011 revolution and stakeholders resumed their agendas after a 2-3 year halt when the area regained its stability. In order to address the outlined research objective, the stakeholders of downtown are identified and categorized into state and non-state actors. This categorization stems from the significantly different impact each group has/can have on downtown urban development, which is highlighted in the literature in chapter 2. The non-state stakeholders are further divided into private sector and arts and culture entities. The private sector includes real estate investors, urban researchers, and entrepreneurship hubs as the analysis revealed they all have direct vested interests in the development of the urban space in downtown. Arts and culture entities are grouped together as they both have overall homogeneous interests, agendas and power.

The impact stakeholders have on the urban transformation of downtown is examined to reveal the influence each stakeholder has based on their interest in being involved in the development of downtown, their development agenda, and the level of power possessed to implement that agenda – these are further elaborated in the stakeholder analysis section of the methodology. Figure 2 shows a schematic of the research's conceptual framework,

listing the main stakeholders, state and non-state, related to downtown Cairo. Due to research scope limitations, some stakeholders outlined in Figure 2 were not included in the analysis – this is further discussed in the stakeholder selection and research limitations sections.

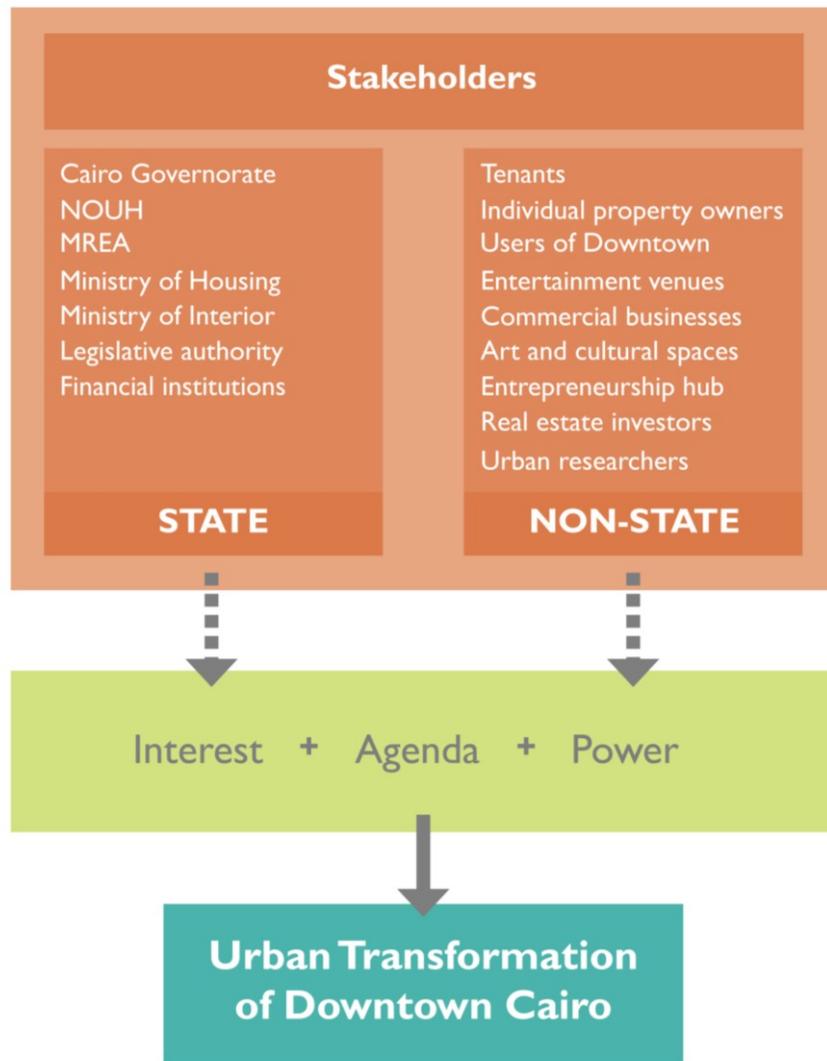


Figure 2: Conceptual framework

### 1.5.2. Data Collection

Egypt is no different than many developing countries where most of the critical information and intricate details are seldom documented; therefore conducting personal

interviews is one of the most effective methods to obtain information. As such, personal interviews with representatives of the stakeholder groups are commonly used to collect primary data input for the stakeholder analysis (Varavasovszky and Brugha, 2000). The primary information collected through the personal interviews was supported by secondary sources such as the Cairo 2050 plans, as well as information published by government agencies such as the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP), the National Organization for Urban Harmony, and the Ministry of Housing. It also included public officials' public statements, interviews and newspaper articles on downtown development plans. Additionally, reports and the development vision made public by Ismaelia was examined for the private investors' perspective, as well as web-based articles from urban experts commenting on urban planning practices in Cairo. Finally, all of the above was supplemented by direct observation and numerous site visits to the study area in downtown to observe the current social and urban condition.

#### *1.5.2.1. Stakeholder Selection*

As each stakeholder holds their own prejudices and preconceptions, it was critical to interview representatives of each stakeholder group to get a more balanced understanding of the different agents involved and how others perceive them. The 'purposive sampling' technique adopted provided a 'maximum variation sampling plan,' common in qualitative research when a wide range of responses better addresses the research question at hand (Wittenberg, 2000, p. 187). It also allowed the collection of the insight and perspectives of the different stakeholders investigated in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of their roles and impact on the urban transformation in downtown, a method known as data triangulation. Data triangulation uses "different sources of

information in order to increase the validity of a study” (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2002, p. 1). Many of the base questions were asked to different interviewees to validate and obtain a more comprehensive perspective of the issue from the different stakeholders. Personal interviews were conducted with the main stakeholders involved and urban development experts. Some of the interviewees are in positions of political and/or financial power, or ‘elites’ as called by Marshall & Rossman (2011, p. 155), with access to privileged information. The interview list includes representatives of different government involved in downtown, real estate investors, art, cultural and entertainment spaces, entrepreneurship hubs, and urban experts as shown in Table 1 below. The complete list of interviews conducted is attached in Appendix A.

Stakeholder group	Organization	Selection Rationale
State: Executive entity	Cairo Governorate	The public entity mandated with the management of the city
State: Real estate owner	Misr Real Estate Assets (MREA)	The largest state-affiliated real estate property owner in downtown
Non-State: Private investors	Al-Ismaelia for Real Estate Investment	The largest private real estate owner in downtown. It also heavily engages with other stakeholders and institutional frameworks involved in downtown
Non-State: Arts & culture	Townhouse Gallery	Arguably the most known contemporary art space in downtown and the largest space-wise. It also co-founded the first downtown art festival.
Non-State: Arts & culture	Mashrabia Gallery	The longest operational contemporary art gallery in downtown. It also co-founded the first downtown art festival.
Non-State: Arts & culture	D-CAF	The longest running annual contemporary art festival in downtown. It was established by Ismaelia
Non-State: Arts & culture	Zawya Cinema	The first and only art-cinema theatre in Cairo. It is based in downtown
Non-State: Entrepreneurship hub	GrEEK Campus	A private tech start-up hub that hosts a variety of regular arts & cultural events
Non-State: Entrepreneurship hub	IceCairo	A sustainable entrepreneurship start-up hub based in downtown
Non-State: Entertainment/restaurant	Kaffein Eish & Malh	One of the most successful emerging restaurants/cafes in downtown
Non-State: Urban expert	Associated Consultants Egypt (ACE)	Architectural firm designed an award-winning re-envisioning of downtown
Non-State: Urban expert	TADAMUN Cairo Urban Solidarity Initiative	Urban research entity that studies urban governance issues and their impacts on built environment and urban justice
Non-State: Urban expert	Cairoobserver	Online platform focused on Cairo's urban fabric and city life

**Table 1: List of stakeholder representatives interviewed and selection rationale**

#### *1.5.2.2. Interview Format and Documentation*

The format of these interviews were based on the interview guide or ‘topical interview’ structure – with general topics prepared to guide the discussion – to allow for a flexible discussion and the opportunity to gain detailed insight and information, (Marshall &

Rossmann, 2011, p. 91). The semi-structured nature of topical interviews is commonly adopted in collecting data for stakeholder analysis as it provides the flexibility to accommodate issues that might emerge during the interview (Varavasovszky and Brugha, 2000). The interview guide was slightly tailored depending on the stakeholder group the interviewee belonged to. The interviews were audio recorded to ensure all the information shared is noted, unless the interviewee did not consent to the recording. Instead of the traditional practice in qualitative research of including extended quotes from interviewees in the research findings, the main findings of the interviews were summarized and incorporated into the results and stakeholder analysis. Interviewees were presented with a consent form, which gave them the option to remain anonymous or give permission to be referenced by name in the thesis findings. The interview guide and consent forms to be used for the interviewing component is attached in Appendix B and C respectively.<sup>1</sup>

### **1.5.3. Stakeholder Analysis**

Varavasovszky and Brugha define stakeholder analysis as “an approach, a tool or set of tools for generating knowledge about actors - individuals and organizations - so as to understand their behavior, intentions, inter-relations and interests; and for assessing the influence and resources they bring to bear on decision-making or implementation processes” (2000, p. 338). It presents these relations in an easy-to-follow visual manner that is beneficial in drawing policy implications for the sustainable, equitable and inclusive development of downtown. The outputs of stakeholder analysis are often presented in the form of tables and maps to illustrate the level of influence and interest

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the attached consent form is in Arabic.

each stakeholder has on the issue studied and the relationship between these stakeholders (Varavasovszky and Brugha, 2000).

The stakeholder analysis framework applied was adopted from a stakeholder analysis toolkit developed by an international development agency, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) (GTZ, 2007).<sup>2</sup> The toolkit was selected as it was used by the GTZ in understanding stakeholder relations and impacts under a comparable context in the Participatory Development Program (PDP) in Urban Areas initiated in Egypt. Four types of stakeholder analysis were adopted from the GTZ methodology: stakeholder power analysis, power resources analysis, stakeholder influence and interest, and stakeholder mapping.

*Stakeholder power analysis* focuses on three core functions of stakeholders: legitimacy, resources, and connections and networks. First legitimacy is assessed in terms of the stakeholder's institutional position and political influence. Secondly, the resources function is based on the financial power of the stakeholder that can be utilized to support its agenda. Lastly, the stakeholder's network is assessed in terms of its relationships with other stakeholders and the level of expert know-how and expertise it possesses.

*Power resources analysis* further breaks down stakeholder influence to better understand the sources of power and identify options for action to change power relations. this analysis is used as a basis for creating strategies of engagement with stakeholders.

*Stakeholder influence and interest* contrasts the stakeholder's level of influence to their

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<sup>2</sup> Note that the GTZ underwent organizational restructuring in 2011 and was renamed the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

interest in being involved in the issue examined. Input for influence is based on the two above analyses, while interest level is extracted from data collected - in this case the interviews and research.

*Stakeholder mapping* visually represents an overview of the stakeholders and their level of influence on and interest in the issue at hand. It also easily shows the relationships and dependencies between the stakeholders, allowing to draw conclusions on alliances and power relations. Stakeholders are divided into three levels of influence (in descending order): key, primary and secondary stakeholders. There are different methods of visualizing the stakeholder analysis maps; the rainbow structure, shown in Figure 3 below, was selected as it “generates a networked architecture” and allows for the further division of stakeholders based on the larger group they fall into, for instance, public sector (state), private sector, etc.

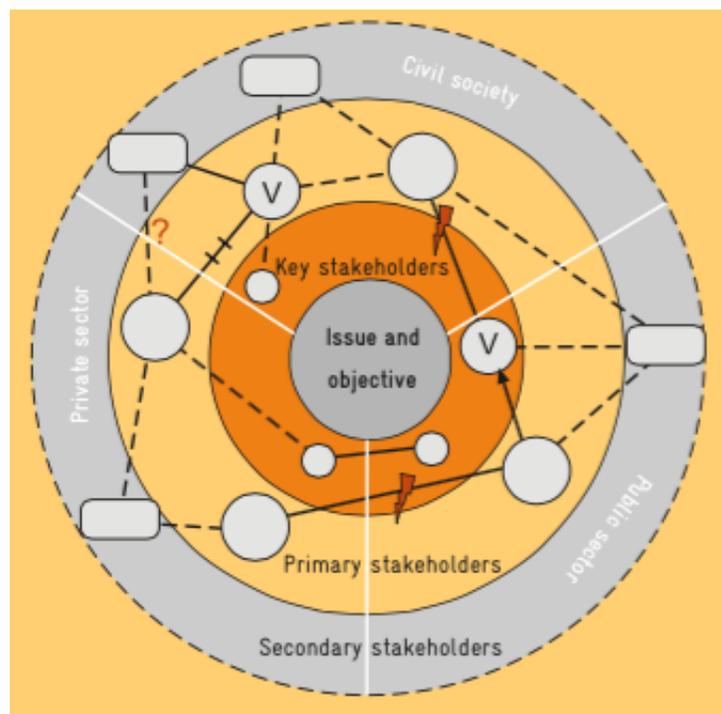


Figure 3: Example of rainbow stakeholder mapping structure (GTZ, 2007)

## Research Limitations

Due to time and resources limitations, this thesis focuses on the stakeholders most influential on the urban transformation of downtown and those reasonably easy to access. The latter criteria excluded the Ministry of Interior from the scope of research, however legislations impacting downtown are discussed as well as implications of the ministry's interventions in the area. The former criteria excluded tenants, individual property owners, and general users and frequenters of downtown. Although these groups contribute to the shaping of downtown's usage and are the most impacted by urban and social transformation in the area, they do not possess comparable level of influence in the urban transformation of downtown compared to the stakeholders listed in Table 1 or the expert knowledge of the urban researchers interviewed. The influence of tenants and property owners is also limited by the restrictions of the rent control legislation, which is further discussed in this thesis. A third group, commercial businesses, were not included in this research as well due to the limited time available to interview and collect information from a diverse-enough group of commercial activities. Recommendation for further research is to incorporate the aforementioned stakeholders into the conducted analysis for a more comprehensive understanding of the stakeholders' dynamics.

Despite its ability to address the research question at hand, stakeholder analysis has some limitations as a research methodology. The outcomes of the analysis are time-sensitive, as the stakeholders' positions of power and perceptions are highly contextual and vary with internal and external influences (Varavasovszky & Brugha, 2000). As such, Varavasovszky & Brugha (2000) recommend reassessing any conclusions drawn from the analysis if significant changes occur that may alter the stakeholders power, agenda

and interest of the examined issue.

One of the data collection methods used is conducting interviews with representatives of the studied stakeholder groups. The complex nature of the relationships between the different stakeholders and the sensitivity of some of the issues discussed may have inhibited the complete honesty of some of the responses from the interviewees. To mitigate the impact this would have on the information and data collected, data triangulation was used in structuring the interview process.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

*It is clear that modern cities are not merely by-products of the operation of capital, nor simply products of the benign imagination of urban planners. Cities are the sites of intense struggles between disparate interests and multiple stakeholders, whose ideas, influences and actions together ultimately shape today's urban realities. The foreign capital, local businesses, the poor, the young, environmentalists, politicians and planners all imagine their cities in their own distinct ways. Many of these actors articulate their visions through powerful state institutions, others in civil society organizations, local communities and social movements; a great majority remain atomized constituencies, yet may engage in individual but shared endeavors.*

A. Bayyat & K. Beikart (2009, p. 238)

The theoretical framework surrounding the research questions was framed around the following topics: global cities and city center development; the traditional role of different stakeholders (the state, private investors, and the arts, cultural and entertainment scene) in downtown development; and power dynamics between different stakeholders. The literature review also draws upon the significant body of research on the history of downtown Cairo, its establishment, development, and architectural and cultural significance, with highlights of events and public policies that contributed to urban and social evolution of downtown. This is complemented with a brief examination of the impact of the political events since 2011 on the built environment. All of the above is utilized to contextualize a deeper understanding of the current power dynamics that can influence development in downtown Cairo.

### 2.1. The Quest for Global City Status

Saskia Sassen (1991) coined the term “global city” in her book, *The Global City* to describe cities that derive their economic and political power from globalization and

international flows of capital rather than from the nation state. For cities to attain that global city status they have to be able to attract foreign and domestic economic investments and become an arts and cultural international hub. To become a place where the crème de la crème want to work, play and live. This notion created a worldwide competition between mega cities and the creation of several city ranking indices (Sassen, 1991), with many scholars such as Janet Abu Lughod (1999), John Friedmann (2001), Peter Marcuse (2006), and Saskia Sassen (1991) developing characteristics and features of what a global and world city looks like.

One cannot label Cairo as a global city just yet due to its limited influence on global markets. Similar to many emerging megacities in the global South, a more accurate description would be “globalizing”, joining the ranks of rapidly growing and transforming cities such as Mumbai and Mexico City. The numerous urban transformations in Cairo from gated communities in the city outskirts to the plethora of shopping malls can be related to this quest – becoming a modern and global city, rivaling neighboring cities such as Dubai and Istanbul (Elshahed, 2007, p. 20). Unlike older global cities such as London and Tokyo, which were shaped to meet the demanding needs of globalization, today’s globalizing cities adopt a “build it and they will come” approach where cities’ urban environments are being upgraded to reflect a global city image in hopes of attracting global flows of capital (Salama, 2009, p. 3).

The idea of a globally connected city is not a creation of the twentieth century nor is it new to Cairo. In medieval times, cities were ranked by population and size and Cairo has been at the center of globalization for centuries as one of the centers of the Islamic Empire and its geographic location along major international trade routes (Salama, 2009,

p. 35 and 123). This was a key force in the shaping of the medieval city as well as the creation of the Khedive Ismail's modern city, "al-Ismailia", downtown Cairo today.

Investments in urban upgrading projects in these globalizing cities have the goal of creating an "attractive urban imagery" where the quality of urban life and culture are commodities in their own right (Harvey, 2001, p. 363; Stevenson, 2003, p. 97). As such, the perception of the city can be even more important than what the city can actually offer, requiring "city-reimagining campaigns... [that market] what the city means, how it feels, and what it looks like" to potential investors and locals alike (Stevenson, 2003, p. 98). These urban investments are often linked to projects that support the cultural economy and the creation of "landscapes of consumption" (Stevenson, 2003, p. 94). Andy Pratt defines the cultural economy – one of the fastest growing economies – as the economy driving the commodification of culture into marketable products and services (2011, p. 3). These manifest into luxury housing, entertainment, cultural and leisure establishments targeting high-income professionals (El Sheshtawy, 2006). City branding also employs architecture to create a distinct image for the city through what is called the "Guggenheim effect", where an architecturally-distinct cultural/art center is built to be a center of attraction for the city as a whole (Pratt, 2011, p. 2).

For a city to attempt to increase its global presence is not in itself something to be condemned, the issue lies in the consequences. The city branding often creates a façade of a Western global city disconnected from the local context, hiding political and social consequences impacting the local population as a result of the global reconstruction of class divisions (Harvey, 2001; Stevenson, 2003). As Farha Ghannam notes through her anthropological study of Bulaq Abu El-Ela in Cairo, globalization creates inequality

“within the city, the same neighborhood, and even the same family” (Ghannam, 2006, p. 253). The spatial and economic duality resultant of the globalization of cities is well documented, as Stevenson puts it “only certain areas of great cities can claim the status of ‘global city’” (2003, p. 97). This could not be more true in Cairo, a city “of extremes” – borrowing Bayyat & Biekart’s term (2009) – where demand for high-end real estate development is booming as never before, while two-thirds of the city’s population live in informal areas with limited public services and discrimination from the state. The state is trying to present Cairo as a modern city, attractive for foreign investments, while the city as a whole is malfunctioning from mismanagement; municipal services, infrastructure investments and other urban problems impact the poor the most, but also everyone in the city.

The negative social impacts of global cities are discussed by Manuel Castells who argues that global cities create a spatial logic that is “globally connected and locally disconnected, [both] physically and socially” (1997, p. 404). The redevelopment often creates an “imagery of success” rather than substance (Harvey, 2001, p. 364), manifesting in changes to the urban form such as gentrification, spatially-concentrated poverty and the physical decay of areas unessential to the marketing of the global city image (Sassen, 1991, p. 251).

Urban researchers from different disciplines define gentrification differently, but at its essence it is the direct or indirect spatial displacement of low-income households and small businesses from the city center to the outskirts to accommodate high-income ones that developed an interest in returning to the city after decades of suburbanization (Sassen, 2010). It is a “combination of social, physical and economic changes” to the

neighborhood scale (Smith, 1987, p. 463), a “class transformation of space” (Slater, 2015), as a result of higher-income professionals’ disinterest in cohabitating with low-income households or the lower-income tenants not being able to afford the increased cost of living in their now upgraded neighborhoods. This can extend beyond displacing original low-income dwellers from their communities, to indirectly excluding them from these spaces – the quartering of public space phenomenon discussed earlier (El Sheshtawy, 2006). Similar to the quest to create globalizing cities in the developing countries, the driving forces of real estate investments and gentrification in the global South are the commodification of housing and real estate speculation, rather than actual housing demands and consumption as in the global North (Marcuse, 2015).

These urban redevelopments turned social engineering projects are evident in many city center redevelopments around the world. Spatially “insulating” social groups from each other does not necessarily entail the erection of walls to spatially segregate (more common in suburbs than in city centers) but was also made possible through the privatization and securitization of space (Stevenson, 2003, p. 45-6). The securitization is based on the manipulation of the public’s aestheticization of fear (Zukin, 1995). Securitization takes different forms, through private security firms entitled to keep the “order” in public, semi-public and privatized spaces often with the assistance of private security companies as is the case in cities such as New York (Zukin, 1995, p. 40); as well as the state’s police (and sometimes even army) forces which is more dominant in developing countries.

A less tangible impact of city branding is the selectivity of whose cultural identity is promoted to represent the city. Any city has several identities and cultures, however those

keen on rebranding the city often champion and promote the most marketable ones. This power to rewrite the “history and political identity of a city” can cause internal social and political struggles within the city with the “selective nature of such appropriations” which may erase certain aspects of the city’s history or segments of society uncondusive to the marketable image of the city (Raymond, 2001, p. 106-8). Such an example is discussed in this thesis.

## **2.2. State Intervention in Downtown Development**

*“State intervention can be analyzed in terms of its impact on the economy politico-institutional structure (itself), ideology, or more directly on social relations, and as such its significance can be laid within the relationship between urban renewal and the various institutions involved.”*

M. Castells (1977, p. 170)

Any city administration is mandated with addressing a long list of problems with limited resources, and Cairo is no different. This forces decision makers to prioritize what issues to tackle for whom they imagine are the “ideal citizen” (Salama, 2009, p. 260). And with the limited accountability to their constituents, the interpretation of what entails the “public good” is sometimes skewed. John Friedmann estimates that decision makers tend to design and develop cities for the top 15% – the high-income and educated – with little to no disregard to the needs of the majority (Bayyat & Biekart, 2009). In a centralized country such as Egypt, all of the decision-makers in the local administration are appointed by, and accountable to, the executive central authority, with no accountability to the general public. The only elected body in the local administration is the local popular councils, which have not been in session since 2012, whose mandate theoretically is to oversee the performance of the local executive office, however in practice they hold very limited power (TADAMUN, 2013).

Theoretically, publicly-funded projects differ from private investments in that maximizing profit takes a backseat to social benefits, however this is not always the case in globalizing cities such as Cairo, where rebranding the city into a global city and attracting private and foreign investments is a national project and is considered in the general public's interest (Salama, 2009, p. 45). These development projects are also supported in part due to projected financial gains to the state in the form of tax revenues (Marcuse, 2006). Although tax collection rates are in general low in Egypt, the government also champions foreign investments as one of the strategies for infusing job opportunities into the labor market.

Castells argues that urban planning can be viewed as an “urban political process” that mediates between conflicting social and economic interests (1977, p. 83). Downtown development is of particular interest to the state for political reasons as well as the economic incentives mentioned above. Downtown in the nation's capital holds a special political identity as the symbol of the state and as such urban development can also be sparked by the state's need to control urban space and “objectify its hegemony in physical forms” (Ghannam, 2002, p. 40). Recent Cairene example (before 2011) was the state securitization of urban space following the 1977 food riots causing the relocation of residents of ‘Ishash Al-Turguman (Ghannam, 2002, p. 36) “to allow for more effective control and policing (Ghannam, 2002, p. 38). Castells' description of the gentrifying impact of the urban replanning of Paris by Haussmann in the nineteenth century on the state's control of public spaces is very relevant to states' motives today – “a Paris occupied by the higher social strata, a showcase of comfort and modernity, is a Paris cut off from potential outbursts of protest” (1977, p. 106).

### 2.3. Securitization and Social Control of Space

*The militarization of the city cannot merely be accomplished through the military body's presence. It also rewires an agency of objects at various scales in order to implement itself and controls the daily function of the city. Barbed wire, road obstacles, movable fences, permanent ones, concrete blocks, opaque walls are many instances of such a militarized agency of the city space. All dedicate their violent physicality to the organization of bodies in space: a few bodies are granted their protection while others are subjected to their side, the exclusionary one.*

L. Lambert (Cairoobserver, 2015, April 1)

The ultimate purpose of the state's different security apparatuses is to protect citizens' and all residents' sense of safety in their city through crime prevention and handing over perpetrators to judiciary authorities for prosecution. There is however a difference between safety and security; Marcuse (2006, p. 925) defines the distinction as the former being "real protection against dangers," while security is protection from "a danger which one *may be* [emphasis is mine] exposed to." Marcuse (2006, p. 925) further argues that "existential insecurity" – which assumes that risk is immeasurable – can be manipulated politically by the state to increase its control of space. Michel Foucault's theories on power and control of space in the prison system have been adopted by urban sociologists and applied to the urban sphere to argue that modern governance similarly capitalizes on the control of space as a form of power (Ismail, 2006, xxv). For instance, terrorism is presented to the public as an issue of national *security* rather than public *safety* to curtail the political public sphere (Habermas, 1964) through the manipulation of the public's perception of fear as discussed earlier (Zukin, 1995). This is accomplished through creating a culture of "obedience and submission" and the continuous reference to casualties (Mitchell, 2002, p. 154). The social control can have different manifestations on the urban space such as security checkpoints and preventing public access to some

areas (Fawaz et al., 2012) as well as technological surveillance systems (Graham, 2012; Marcuse, 2006). Technological surveillance systems such as surveillance cameras may increase the perception of security, however it indirectly dictates how the public uses these monitored spaces and the activities that occur (Zieleniec, 2007), which directly impacts the public's right to public spaces. All of these are interventions implemented by the state in downtown Cairo over the past few years and discussed in this thesis.

Security then in this case becomes a term used discretionally by state security apparatus to legitimize limitations on the use and access to public space (Marcuse, 2006) and reconfigure urban spaces (Graham, 2012). Stephen Graham calls this the “new military urbanism” (2012, p. 136) and along with Peter Marcuse (2006) perceives it as a threat to public life as it “permanently target(s) everyday urban sites, circulations and populations” (Graham, 2012, p. 136). The legitimacy through which this is carried out to justify rather extreme transformation to the urban space brings along a rapid normalization of the new controlled reality by the public. The new military urbanism invokes nationalistic narratives to “sanitize violence” through propaganda (Graham, 2012, p. 137) and the social production of news (Hall, 1978), allowing it to limit undesired political activity in the public sphere and indirectly deters vulnerable individuals/groups (women, youth, or individuals of marginalized ethnic background) from using these spaces for fear of discrimination and harassment by security forces (Fawaz et al., 2012). Again this is not to be confused with the legitimate purpose of law enforcement to protect the public's sense of safety and eliminate, or at least limit, illegal activities or actions in the public space, whether as benign as illegal vehicle parking, peddling and street vending, or more violent and criminal activities.

## 2.4. Arts and Culture in Downtown

The ‘Creative Class’ is a term coined by Richard Florida to describe talented and creative people that require, well, creativity in their professions, such as the arts, design, entertainment, media, but also science, engineering education, computer programming and the financial sector (Florida, 2002). In this research I will use the term to describe the first group exclusively, the artists and creative types. Florida garnered a lot of controversy with his *Creative Class Theory*, which stipulates that the driver of economic growth will no longer be production-based but knowledge-based, and that the creative class are at the forefront of it. Criticisms are mostly directed at the theory’s “creative class trickle down effect” assumption that ignores the gentrifying effects ensued by the creative professionals and the impact these industries have on the financial stability of low-paid temporary workers (Schnook, 2013, p. 32-34).

As Zukin (1995) discusses in her book *The Cultures of Cities*, vibrant cultural institutions help the branding of cities as they often offer spaces within which creativity and ideas are fostered and can interact and attract other modes of consumption that feed into the city’s economy. The creative class are often interested in downtowns for their studio and exhibition places for many reasons, central location, lower rents as a result of deteriorated physical condition, as well as gaining inspiration by being close to the hustle, contestation and contradictions that are manifested in downtown. As is discussed in the following section, the conglomeration of artists and art spaces often have a gentrifying effect on the urban space, even if unintended by the artists (Abaza, 2014a).

## 2.5. Real Estate Investors and Downtown Upgrading

Real estate is a lucrative form of investment especially in cities that are highly dependent on tourism such as Cairo. Therefore real estate investors see deteriorating city centers as unutilized real estate hidden gems. They see downtown as a set of central locations that provide their residents ease of transportation, shorter commutes, and easy accessibility to services and entertainment, and in the case of Cairo, beautiful architecture unrivaled with anything else in the city. Neil Smith (1987, p. 462) uses the rent gap theory to explain this as the “gap between the actual capitalized ground rent (land value) given its present use and the potential ground rent that might be attained under a higher and better use through rehabilitation, complete redevelopment or other transformations.” It is quite clear to foresee how gentrification can be utilized as a tool to reduce the rent gap in deteriorated neighborhoods of high real estate potential.

This is why capitalists have shown interest in what Zukin labeled as the ‘symbolic economy’ of the city, investing in arts and cultural activities to make the area seem more friendly and inviting to the higher-income groups (Abaza, 2014a) – “humaniz(ing) the space of real estate development” (Zukin, 1995, p. 22). In other words, real estate investors are known to promote the arts to gentrify these areas by creating housing demand for targeted groups for a higher return on their investments. Some of these arts quarters spring up organically while others are deliberate parts of the real estate developer’s plans (Zukin, 1995). Abaza (2014a) examines the Cairene downtown emerging alternative arts and cultural scene and questions whether Zukin’s concept is applicable. This increases the standard of living and services in the area, however it is through social segregation, driving out mid- and low-income groups from the area that

cannot afford the higher rents, pushing them to city outskirts away from their social networks, places of work and school. This capitalist utilization of the arts not only impacts the built environment, but also eventually influences the production of arts itself; Zukin (1995) documents the impact of the dependence of major arts and cultural institutions on capitalist philanthropy on the production and accessibility of arts in New York City. In addition to attracting higher-income groups to downtown, through the creation of a vibrant artist-friendly environment and their control of real estate, investors can also utilize ‘monopoly rents’ from the artists themselves (Harvey, 2001, p. 409) through the control over the means of production and marketing of their art (Harvey 2013, p. 93).

## **2.6. Power Dynamics between Different Stakeholders**

*“The question is no longer to know how the social life of a neighborhood is organized by the dominant culture, but how the housing and the infrastructural policies of the city are influenced by the relations of force between social groups structurally determined by their interests.”*

M. Castells (1977, p. 7)

Thus far, it has been shown that city centers are spaces of contestation, or as Abaza (2011) calls it “space wars”, between different agents. The strong relation between urban problems and the control of space on one end, and politics, power and policymaking on the other, prompted Manuel Castells to suggest the introduction of concepts and theories to understand the intricacies and conflicts in the urban policy decision-making process (1977, p. 57 and 167). Clarence Cen (1989) introduced the “urban regime theory” to analyze the influence of private and public sectors on urban policymaking and “how various interests are incorporated into governing” disadvantaged and marginalized groups (Mossberger and Stoker, 2001, p. 810). Over the past two decades the urban regime

theory became widely used in the field of urban politics as Stone provides a comprehensive framework for the role of power and politics in urban development (Gendron, 2006). In his theory Stone argues that the “power struggle concerns, not control and resistance, but gaining and fusing a capacity to act – power to not power over” (Stone, 1989, p. 229 quoted in Gendron, 2006, p. 6). He defines power *to* as a collective power achieved through collaborations and negotiations between different actors, which is a close model to how he sees the urban policy decision-making process, whereas power *over* is an individualistic power (Gendron, 2006, p.5).

The urban regime theory is applicable to the contestation over the control of spatial capital discussed by Ryan Centner (2008), who examines how economic, cultural and social capital are utilized for securing control over spatial capital. Centner (2008) defines spatial capital as “the ability to commodify space, the power to take – and make – place in the most literal sense”, which can be secured by the “righteous belonging space” – the legitimization of the occupation of space through creating narratives that feed into nationalism, ethnicity, law, etc. (Centner, 2015). This in conjunction with Hall’s (1978) social production of news can be – and has been – used as a tool to increase social power of certain groups, which may negatively impact those with minimal social capital and increase urban inequality in the city.

## **2.7. A Brief History of the Urban Evolution of Downtown Cairo**

### ***2.7.1. The Establishment of a New Quarter, the Khedival Belle Èpoque (1867-1952)***

Downtown Cairo was developed by Khedive Ismail in the late 1800s to showcase a modern Cairo as “the symbol and showpiece of Egypt’s progress” (Raymond, 2001, p.

311) to numerous heads of state during the Suez Canal opening in 1869. Janet Abu-Lughod (1971) and André Raymond (2001) give two of the most comprehensive accounts of the historic, political and economic contexts surrounding Khedive Ismail's plans to create a new city, dubbed "Al-Ismailia". Historians differ on the inspiration behind developing Khedival Cairo, most credit the drive to build a modern city to Ismail's visit to the newly-redeveloped Paris during the 1867 World Fair. Others argue that Ismail had the idea long before his 1867 Paris visit but that it gave the drive to start the implementation of his vision (Raymond, 2001) and that he used it as a networking opportunity to secure funding of this mega project (AlSayyad, 2011). Ismail charged Ali Mubarak, the Minister of Public Works, with this ambitious undertaking to create an upscale suburb in less than three years – in time for the Suez Canal Opening (AlSayyad, 2011). The direction of all infrastructure investment towards the new quarter negatively impacted the old city, which consequently suffered from decades of disinvestment (Raymond, 2001).

The Haussmannian influence on the planning of al-Ismailia was evident, with the radial network of straight, wide streets connected by squares, and public green spaces, all which contrast with the labyrinthine network of narrow streets prevalent in the vernacular urban design of Islamic Cairo (Raymond, 2011). The Haussmanian urban planning philosophy with its wide boulevards not only facilitated mobility when contrasted with the labyrinth-like vernacular city architecture of the old city, but also increased the state's ability to control the space (Abaza, 2014b; Elsadek, 2011).

Ali Mubarak was able to complete the infrastructure and physical development of the Ismailia quarter in record time, however the area took several years to attract residents

(AlSayyad, 2011). During the rule of Ismail's son, Khedive Tawfiq (1879-1892), the area witnessed a significant boom and started evolving from a well-designed yet empty residential suburb to an urban center. Tawfiq continued his father's development dream and created the adjacent Al-Tawfiqiyya with bustling commercial zones and governmental entities (Abu-Lughod, 1971).<sup>3</sup> The area underwent a rapid growth before World War I (1897-1907), coupled with an influx of foreigners who found the modern quarter a favorable place to live and work, turning it into the cosmopolitan center of the city (Raymond, 2001). Figure 4 shows a map of Khedival downtown in relation to the traditional (Islamic) city (AlSayyad, 2011).

The urban development of downtown has always been tied to the country's political environment; the British occupation of Egypt and the influx of Europeans and foreigners had a significant impact on the architecture of downtown (Raymond, 2001). The foreign presence and influence increased significantly between the two World Wars, giving way to downtown's titling as "the colonial city", with 62% of foreigners residing in Al-Tawfiqiyya in 1927 (Raymond, 2001). Now Al-Ismailia created a spatial divide between the "traditional" Cairo where the locals lived, and the "modern" Cairo where foreigners and the crème de la crème of wealthy and well-connected Egyptians lived and socialized (Raymond, 2001, p. 333).

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<sup>3</sup> Al-Tawfiqiyya is the area enclosed within 26<sup>th</sup> of July street to the south, Ramses Avenue to the west and Gomhoriya street to the east (Raafat 2003, 53). Today the collective area of Al-Ismailia and Al-Tawfiqiyya is referred to as downtown Cairo, al-Ismailia, and Khedival Cairo.

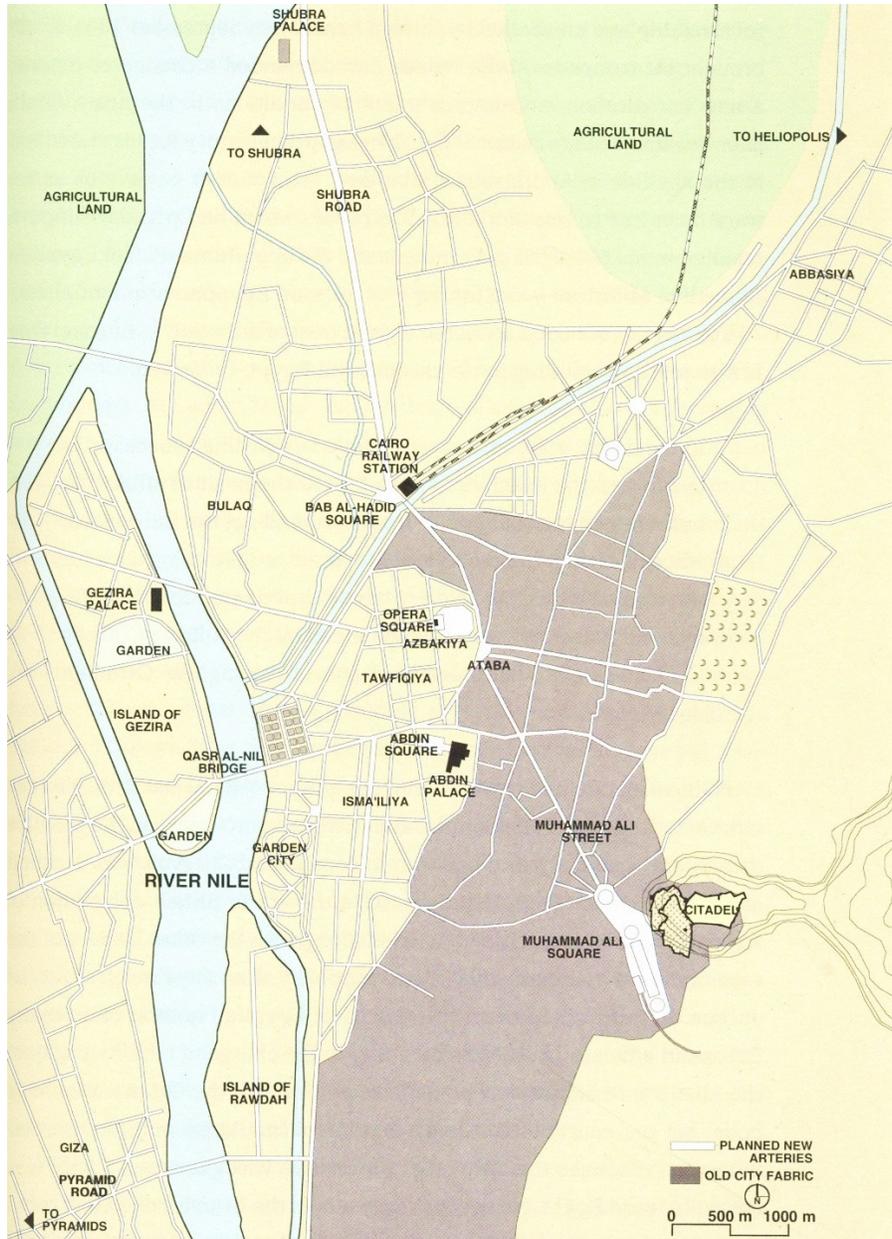


Figure 4: Map of Khedival Cairo in relation to the traditional (Islamic) city (AlSayyad, 2011, p. 215)

### 2.7.2. The Egyptianization of Downtown in the New Republic (1956-1973)

Galila El Kadi's renowned book "Le Caire: centre en mouvement" (2012) continued from where Abu-Lughod (1971) left off, focusing more on the transformations of urban space in Cairo, and downtown in particular, over the past 70 years. Downtown Cairo remained the center for the city's elites and the hub for commercial and cultural activities up to the

establishment of the Republic of Egypt in 1952, which caused a major shift in the social fabric of downtown dwellers sparked by the state's ideological shift from a monarchy to socialist state. This caused a transformation in the identity of downtown over the past sixty years from an elite and exclusive space to one that average Egyptians claim as their own, with the proliferation of affordable goods through small shops and street vendors, and traditional cafes that are now welcoming to men and women alike. Mona Abaza further analyzes the transformation of downtown and Cairo in general through an evolving consumer culture in her book *Changing Consumer Cultures of Modern Egypt – Cairo's Urban Reshaping* (2006). This section will highlight the main stages of urban transformation of downtown during the four regimes that governed the country over the past sixty years.

The social fabric of downtown started to change in the 1950s due to the transformation of the political and economic ideology. State neglect of downtown was not an immediate consequence of the establishment of the New Republic in 1952 as many believe, on the contrary Nasser started his presidency with significant state investments in downtown, which created some of today's iconic features of downtown, the expansion of Tahrir Square, the construction of the Mogama building and the eastern Nile Corniche – all of which used to be the British barracks, garden and residence of the British Commissioner during the monarchy (Raymond, 2001). These urban development projects had the obvious purpose of Egyptianizing downtown's colonial identity and went hand-in-hand with Nasser's 1959 national economic development program, which had a spatial manifestation in downtown with the emergence of state-owned commercial enterprises and department stores (AlSayyad, 2011) and the nationalization of many others, all which

cater to new clientele – middle-income Egyptians. Foreigners were negatively impacted by Nasser’s nationalistic economic policies and the increasing tension with the West following the 1967 war prompting the majority of them to leave the country, which caused a stark change in the social composition of downtown – now inhabited by government works and army officials and other middle-income families (AlSayyad, 2011). The new regime’s socialist ideology inspired several legislations aimed to lower and control rents and increase the power of tenants. These legislations evolved over 20 years (1952-1974) – extending to Sadat’s presidency – and created a great disincentive for property owners to invest and maintain their properties, impacting the real estate market in the country as a whole (ElSheshtawy, 2004). These factors collectively increased the accessibility of downtown to the average Egyptian and transformed it from a high-end quarter to a destination of the middle-income (and some low-income) Egyptians for work, leisure and residence (El Sheshtawy, 2004).

This initial state interest in downtown decreased during Nasser’s presidency with the economic challenges facing the country following the Suez Canal crisis and the change of the national urban planning ideology to expansion eastward and westwards of the city and creating new urban suburbs such as the “City of Victory” (Madinet Nasr), “The Engineers” (Mohandiseen) to mark the new modern Egypt and the strong investments in public housing continuing the social state ideology.

### ***2.7.3. Downtown under the Infitah and Privatization policies (1974-2010)***

The state’s lack of investment in downtown persisted over several decades even with Sadat’s neoliberal open door policy in the 1970s as the national urban policy geared towards developing desert land and creating new cities instead of revitalizing the existing

urban fabric. The ensuing commodification of land in new areas resulted in developments that are socially exclusive of the majority of the population, leaving central locations such as downtown neglected due to its acquired low socioeconomic status (Salama, 2009). As the neoliberal city “is shaped more by the logic of the market than by the needs of its inhabitants” (Beikart & Bayyat, 2009, p. 817), this increased class segregation in a city such as Cairo that was able to create quarters suitable, in demand and affordable to different social mixes for centuries (Salama, 2009), which provoked (and continues to provoke) “struggles and increased stratification, inequalities, hierarchies and ‘difference’ among Egyptians” (Singerman, 2009, p. 12). Beikart & Bayyat describe this phenomenon best as “[cities of] extremes – of immense wealth and poverty, comfort and misery, cosmopolitanism and communalism, community and alienation, massive recreation and boredom, hygiene and disease, hope and despair” (2009, p. 817).

Neoliberalism as a driver for urban development promises “a [never achieved] spatial version of trickle-down economics” (Harvey, 2013, p. 29), but results in many undesired social impacts, such as gentrification. State-sponsored gentrification is not unprecedented in Egypt, although it has not been implemented on large scales such as in cities like New York (Sassen, 1991), Beirut (Shwayri, 2002) and Istanbul (Ergun, 2004). Sadat’s embracement of a neoliberal political economy ideology impacted city planning policies. Similar to Khedive Ismail over one hundred years before him, he envisioned a new Cairo, this time with the inspiration of American cities such as Los Angeles (Ghannam, 2006).

Throughout the twentieth century, downtown was a space for political discontent, where the organizers of many revolutions and uprisings congregated to raise their demands from the state, from anti-colonial and anti-monarchy uprisings of Mostafa Kamel, Saad

Zaghloul, and the Free Officers, followed by student and socialist movements in the 60s and 70s (Waly, 2013). The highly politicized atmosphere was not a deterrent to the country's literary elites throughout the century such as Naguib Mahfouz and countless others, who congregated regularly at downtown's cafes and bars (Waly, 2013). The Mubarak presidency had a chokehold on the streets of Cairo, but this did not completely stifle political dissent, massive protests in 2003 against the war on Iraq and the 2005 protests against the allegedly rigged parliamentary elections also took place in the streets of downtown (Waly, 2013).

#### ***2.7.4. The 2011 Revolution and Downtown Today***

One cannot discuss the transformation in downtown without discussing the political events in Egypt since 2011 and their manifestation in the urban space. January 2011 was not the first time Egyptians took to the streets of downtown for political demands, but it was by far the most significant in modern Egyptian history, both in number and in outcome. The newly-gained sense of ownership of public space manifested through occupation of public squares for political activities and protests and encroachments for commercial usages (street vendors). However, the state gradually reclaimed downtown space through the introduction of physical barriers and limiting access to certain areas of downtown during the ensuing turbulent political events. Portions of downtown into highly securitized zones, with walls closing off vital mobility arteries, and increased security presence (Abaza, 2014b).<sup>4</sup> As Abaza discusses, in the first two years following the 2011 revolution downtown Cairo became a field of "guerilla urban battles through

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<sup>4</sup> Mohammed Mahmoud Street in downtown (west of Khedival downtown) witnessed two significant altercations between protestors and the security apparatus during the rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF).

confrontations between protesters and police forces” (2014b, p. 11). The increased unrest during 2011 and 2012 resulted in the emergence of physical barriers, heightened security presence and at times checkpoints around vital buildings in downtown, as well as the erection of walls across certain streets around the ministries in the area completely blocking vehicular and pedestrian mobility (most notably the Qasr El-Aini street, a major street connecting the Corniche with Tahrir Square, west of Khedival downtown examined in this thesis). These walls remain in place today with some being replaced by gates. Even though these excessive forms of spatial control are adjacent to and not within the area of study, the implications and people’s perception of space spill over to all of downtown. Abaza (2014b) examines the demarcation of the area through “walled buffer zones” (p. 12) in relation to the “guerilla urban battles” (p. 11) that took place in 2011 and 2012 in downtown. Strong analogies can be drawn between these securitization manifestations and the securitization and militarization literature discussed earlier by Fawaz et al. (2012), Graham (2012) and Marcuse (2006).

If one is to use Jan Gehl’s classification of cities<sup>5</sup>, Cairo today would be an “invaded city”, a city overtaken by traffic, with little public space left (El Sadek, 2011, p. 12), yet Cairenes have proven to be resourceful in appropriating the limited space not overtaken by traffic or commercial activities for their leisure. And despite the traffic congestion, numerous mobility obstructions, noise pollution during peak hours, the numerous retail alternatives in shopping malls along the Nile Corniche and neighboring areas (Abaza 2009, 29) and other aspects some would consider stress-inducing, many Cairenes still consider downtown to be a place of leisure and socializing in the countless alley cafes

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<sup>5</sup> Gehl classified cities into four types: the Traditional City, the Invaded City the Abandoned City, and the Reconquered City (El Sadek, 2011).

and affordable eateries. Despite luxury boutiques fleeing to the western banks of the Nile and shopping malls, downtown Cairo remains a bustling commercial and shopping destination for mid-income Egyptians. It also remains as always a major attraction to intellectuals and art-enthusiasts from higher socioeconomic backgrounds interested in alternative scenes to the sanitized world of shopping malls and gated communities.

## Chapter 3: Government Development Plans and Actions

Following decades of neglect, the Egyptian government started paying attention – albeit slight – to downtown in the 1990s with the introduction of several pieces of legislation that prohibit the demolition of buildings of historic or architectural significance, which resulted in the conducting of inventories of buildings of historic/architectural significance.<sup>6</sup> This was influenced by the numerous campaigns by intellectuals and the media to appropriate downtown as “national heritage” after decades of being condemned as a “symbol of colonial culture” (Abaza 2011, 2014). Prior to Law No. (117/1983) the heritage legislation only applied to buildings constructed prior to 1879, and thus were inapplicable to those in the downtown area (El Kadi, 2005). This resulted in the inclusion of over sixty buildings into the national list of historical monuments (El Kadi and Elkerdany, 2006, 348). This section will look at the different government entities that undertook interest in downtown and the plans, projects and interventions they have undertaken or attempted to undertake in downtown.

### 3.1. Cairo Governorate

In a press conference on March 17<sup>th</sup> 2015, the Cairo Governor is quoted saying “if funding is available, within six months downtown Cairo will become a museum. A museum of architecture” (Amin, 2015). The ambiguity of the comment garnered a lot of attention and criticism on social media particularly from those already worried that downtown Cairo might follow the lead of the Lebanese capital, Beirut (Nagy, 2015). It

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<sup>6</sup> According to El Kadi (2005) six prime ministerial decrees were issued between 1993 and 1998 in this regard that protect these buildings from demolishing or major transformation, enforce penalties for any violators, and set classification of what qualifies for buildings of historic/architectural significance.

was particularly worrisome as the government has a track record of sterilizing public spaces deemed of historic significance for touristic purposes, such as the area surrounding al-Rifa'i and Sultan Hasan mosques in historic Cairo (Kuppinger, 2006). This section will present the governorate's main upgrading interventions and development projects in downtown over the past 15 years.

### ***3.1.1. Governorate Interventions in Downtown***

The state embarked on several interventions to the public space in downtown since the army deposed President Morsi from power in July 2013, all of which reconstitute state presence and control of the public domain. Following the forceful dispersal of the large pro-Morsi sit-ins in Rabaa Square in Nasr City (east of downtown) and Nahda Square (west of downtown) in August 2013, the security apparatus decided to close the Sadat metro station at Tahrir Square, which is one of two transfer stations that connect the two metro lines, to limit access of pro-Morsi protesters from congregating at Tahrir. This caused a clear strain not only on those trying to reach downtown, but also on the three million daily metro commuters who all have to use the al-Shuhada station at Ramsis Square or Ataba Station at Ataba Square for transferring between the metro lines (Cairo Governorate, n.d.). Over the past year and a half several promises were made that the station would reopen, but it is still closed as of this date despite the recommendation of the Commissioners at the State Council to reopen the station, citing the lack of any “realistic or legal justifications” (Ahram Online, 2015). In addition to the Sadat Metro station, the pedestrian tunnel that connects Abdel Miniem Riad bus terminal (north of Tahrir Square) to the square was closed by security to securitize the vicinity of the

Egyptian Museum, and the sidewalk adjacent to the museum was blocked by barbed wire, forcing pedestrians to walk on the street next to cars (Hanna, 2015).

The second half of 2013 was a politically turbulent time in Egypt and the state was re-instituting its presence and power to return to some form of political stability and public security. In this regard, in November 2013, Dr. Hazem El-Biblawy, Prime Minister of the interim government at the time, placed the foundation of the martyr monument in Tahrir Square to commemorate those who were killed during the 2011 and 2013 revolutions. On the surface this appears to be a good gesture from the government, however it was met with great dissent from the general public, particularly the “revolutionaries” who found it ironic and offensive that the state which was yet to bring those from within its ranks who killed protestors to justice, created a monument to remember those who have fallen – see Figure 5. A group of protestors defaced and destroyed the monument less than 24 hours after Dr. Biblawy’s visit, which coincided with the eve of the 2011 and 2012 Mohamed Mahmoud clashes (Mada Masr, 2013). The square was then left empty for over a year before the government made a second attempt in February 2015 by inaugurating a 20-meter flagpole carrying the Egyptian flag, shown in Figure 6. It was chosen to center the contested square as a uniting symbol that would not garner criticism from any political group (Fick, 2015).



**Figure 5: Revolution monument built in November 2013 destroyed by protestors**

**(photo credit left photo The Cairo Post, right photo Aswat Masriya)**



**Figure 6: Tahrir Square 20-meter flagpole erected February 2015  
(Photo credit: Hajer Awatta, captured April 2015)**

The newfound sense of freedom and ownership of the public domain also attracted a plethora of street vendors to the streets of downtown Cairo, almost rivaling those in neighboring `Ataba and Mūski areas. The cancerous expansion of street vendors in the streets of downtown caused numerous problems for many users of downtown: store owners now had cheaper competition on the sidewalks across their stores, traffic and parking were more difficult as they at times overtook several lanes and the sidewalk (as

was the case in a section of Ṭal`at Ḥarb and 26<sup>th</sup> of July streets shown in Figure 7), and women who experienced increased levels of verbal harassment and often felt unsafe in the streets of downtown that were now filled with young men competing to sell their merchandise. The street vendors however see it from a different perspective, that the plummeting economic situation since 2011 forced them to take on this occupation as a means for survival, and that it was their right to be there as it was their only way of making a living away from a life of crime. They are aware that their presence is illegal and have reached out to local authorities to have their status legalized, however Cairo Governor Decree No. (13527/2013) put a freeze on the licensing of kiosks and other obstructions on public space licensing within the governorate and ordered districts to remove all unlicensed kiosks constructed after January 2011 (Cairo Governorate, 2013).



**Figure 7: Street vendors in downtown Cairo. Left photo: 26<sup>th</sup> July St., right photo: Ṭal`at Ḥarb st. (Photo credit: Hajer Awatta, captured March 2014)**

On 24<sup>th</sup> August 2014, the governorate of Cairo with the support of the police forces conducted a security campaign to remove all street vendors by force from the streets of downtown, particularly Ṭal`at Ḥarb, Qar al-Nil, 26<sup>th</sup> of July, and Ramsis streets. This was unlike any other street vendor removal campaign the city has witnessed, with the presence of riot police and armored tanks that remained in the streets of downtown for

weeks after to ensure that the vendors do not return. Armored tanks have been cleared from the main streets of downtown and are now centralized on the Behlar passage (connects Ṭal'at Ḥarb and Qasr al-Nil streets).

The Cairo Governor, Galal Said, announced in a press conference a few days after the relocation that it was time for order to return to the streets of downtown and that public good precedes the benefits to a specific group. The Governor stated that his administration “has a clear vision that will solve the street vendors’ problem from the roots” (Cairo Governorate, 2014). This plan is the relocation of 1750 street vendors to the parking lot of Turgumān bus station across from Ramsis street temporarily till a shopping center is built in Wabur al-Thalg land, which according to the Governor should be complete by the beginning of 2015. The Wābūr al-Thalg property used to house the Alexandria Company for Cooling (Sharikat al-Iskandariyya li al-Tabrīd) before it was consolidated in 2000 with the National Company for Construction (al-Sharika al-Qawmiya li al-Tashyīd) (Qawaid, 2015). In September 2014, a month after their relocation, the union of street vendors<sup>7</sup> held a press conference to voice their issues and grievances from the relocation to Turgumān, particularly the lack of foot traffic to the area, which their livelihood is highly dependent on (Albawaba News, 2014). At the time of writing (April 2015) construction of the new shopping center is yet to start in Wābūr al-Thalg and the governorate’s focus and media attention completely shifted towards the revitalization project of downtown.

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<sup>7</sup> The union of street vendors is an informal group that was established in 2012 to speak to authorities on behalf of the vendors.

### ***3.1.2. Governorate Downtown Development Projects***

Abdelazim Al-Wazir, Cairo Governor (2004-2011), was the first governor in decades to take particular interest in rescuing the deteriorated downtown. In January 2008 he established and headed the Board of Trustees of Historic Cairo (BTHC) (Maglis Umana' al-Qāhira al-Tārīkhiyya). The BTHC was established to be the custodian of downtown Khedival Cairo, promote and oversee the rehabilitation of the architecturally-significant buildings and revive the area as a whole and escape the bureaucratic administrative labyrinth caused by the division of downtown Cairo under two administrative districts (Hayy): Gharb (west) and Abdin. The administrative districts are mandated with the provision of public services and utilities as well as urban management within their jurisdiction, according to the Local Administration Law, Law No. (43, 1979) (TADAMUN, 2014a). As such, any permits for renovations have to go through the individual districts.

The board included three branches: the executive arm (the governorate overseeing renovations undertaken), the technical advisors (NOUH experts offering technical advice on restorations), and the financial support (the heads of the central bank and other national and investment banks and the Misr Insurance Holding Company (MIHC) to secure funding). The board of trustees also included Misr Real Estate Assets (MREA), which as mentioned earlier is a subsidiary of MIHC and the largest real estate owner in the area. A bank account at the central bank was created for the board of trustees to deposit the annual monetary contributions collected for the renovation projects from the financial sector and MIHC, as well as any state contributions. There is no official record of how much money was raised by the BTHC, or any estimation. However, it has been

reported in 2010 that EGP 5.6 million were allocated to renovate 241 historic buildings in downtown as part of a three-zone plan to revitalize the area (Youssef, 2010). The three renovation intervention zones were: buildings overlooking 6<sup>th</sup> of October bridge along Ramsis street till `Abd al-Min`im Rīād Square; buildings and repaving in Ṭal`at Ḥarb Square; and then Qasr Al-Nil street from Opera to Tahrir Squares. The Governor also announced ambitious plans to transform downtown to a pedestrian-only zone, with the exception of environmentally-friendly electric buses that serve the area as well as rebuilding the Opera House in its original location in Opera Square (Youssef, 2010).<sup>8</sup>

The only aspects that were implemented were the façade-repainting of several buildings in Tahrir and Ṭal`at Ḥarb Squares and Ramsis street, as well as the renovation of Emad El Dine street (a popular entertainment attraction during the 1940s-1950s with many cinemas, north of July 26<sup>th</sup> street) and numerous iconic buildings such as the commercial centers (the Stock Exchange and several national banks headquarters), department stores, cultural centers, Radio Building, Riche Café and others (El Kadi, 2005). The cost of the performed renovations is not publicly available, so it is unclear how much of the EGP 5.6 million announced was utilized. The Governor's plans for downtown Cairo were halted by the unexpected revolution in 2011.

The board of trustees and its fund did not resurface until 2013 under Governor Galal Said, who was appointed by the interim cabinet after ex-President Morsi was deposed. It resurfaced under a different name, the Executive Committee for the Khedival Cairo Development Project (al-Lagna al-Tanfithiyya li Mashrū` Taṭwīr al-Qāhira al-Khīdīwiyya). The executive committee, headed by the Governor, announced in late 2014

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<sup>8</sup> The Opera House was originally built during Khedive Ismail's reign in 1869 in the Opera Square, but was burned in 1971. It is now replaced with a multi-level parking garage.

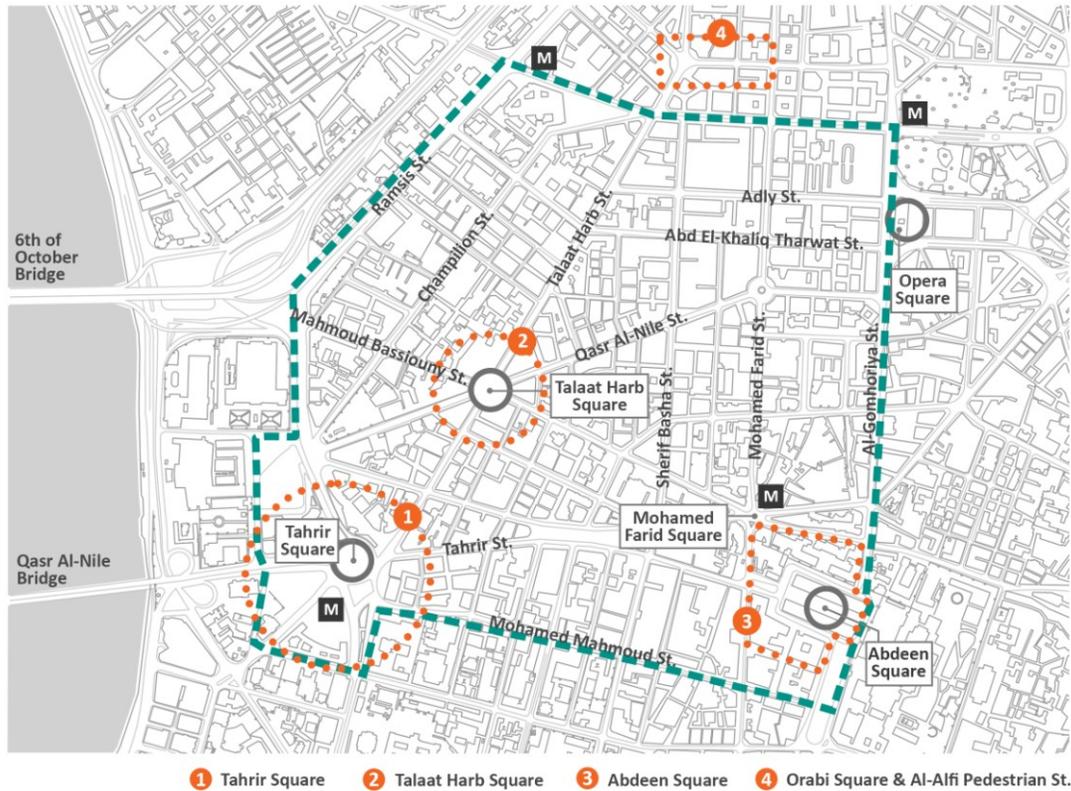
the undertaking of a comprehensive development project to revive Khedival Cairo. The project has two avenues of intervention; façade and public space renovation, and addressing traffic fluidity. Pilot projects of façade renovation are to be implemented in four areas; Tahrir Square was the first to be renovated with the façade renovation of buildings surrounding the square, which include residential buildings, `Umar Makram Mosque, one of the American University in Cairo's buildings, and the Tahrir Mogamma` (administrative building). Al-Alfi project focuses on renovating al-Alfi pedestrian street and adjacent `Urabi Square, which includes façade renovation of surrounding buildings and the upgrading of infrastructure, street paving and lighting and adding green elements to the space. The third area includes the buildings along Tal`at Harb Square and Qasr al-Nil street up to Mohamed Farīd Square. Finally, Tahrir street up to and including Abdin Square will be renovated (Arram, personal communication, March 25, 2015). These areas were selected based on consultations with urban planners such as Dr. Sahar Attia<sup>9</sup> and advisors from the NOUH such as Dr. Soheir Hawas.<sup>10</sup> The Abdin Square development project to be implemented by the executive committee is technically supported on a voluntary basis by faculty and students of urban planning staff at Cairo University, under the supervision of Dr. Assem El-Gazzar, the Chairman of the GOPP (S. Attia, personal communication, February 23, 2015). The Arab Contractors' "villas and heritage division" (Idārit al-Quṣūr wa al-Turāth) is the contractor assigned all building renovations for the

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<sup>9</sup> Dr. Sahar Attia's architectural firm, Associated Consultants Egypt, in partnership with AECOM won a 2009 international competition for the "revitalization and upgrading of the central zone of Khedival's Cairo" which was to be included as part of the Cairo 2050 development vision.

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Soheir Hawas is Professor of architecture and urban design at Cairo University, member of NOUH's board of directors, and previous Head of NOUH's Studies, Research and Policy Department. She is also the author of al-Qāhirah al-khidiwīyah : rasād wa-tawthīq 'imārah wa-'umrān mintaqah wasaṭ al-madīnah (2002).

project. The four intervention areas are shown in Figure 8 below and the results are shown in Figure 9.



**Figure 8: 2014-2015 BTHC four phases of urban upgrading interventions**

The coordination between the different entities involved is through a weekly meeting organized by the governorate, a working group which includes the heads of the Abdin and Gharb districts and their associates, as well as representatives from NOUH and MREA (A. Ismail, personal communication, March 31, 2015). The local media has been paying close attention to these projects with regular updates on the progress of the renovation work and numerous public appearances of the district heads of Abdin and Gharb, and the Governor who announced that the facades of 20 buildings (of 400 planned) are currently being renovated (Al Mal News, 2015, March 28) and estimated the completion of the revitalization project in two years' time (Al Bawaba, 2015).



**Figure 9: Façade upgrading in Tahrir Square (top photos), Talaat Harb Square (bottom left), and Alfi Street (bottom right). (Photo credit: Hajer Awatta, captured May 2015)**

The governorate has limited financial resources to undertake this endeavor, so it only able to secure approximately 10% of the development project's budget. It depends on attracting the majority of the funding from other public entities and private contributions, with the majority of the financial contributions coming from BTHC members the Central Bank, Union of Egyptian Banks, and MREA (A. Ismail, personal communication, March 31, 2015). Private sector companies were also approached by the governorate to contribute to the project, Ismaelia for instance financed the façade renovation of a building on Tahrir Square (A. Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015), in addition to large companies and businesses whose offices are in the renovated buildings (R. Arram, personal communication, March 25, 2015).



2015 with the attendance of the Prime Minister, current and previous Cairo Governors, and other officials. Queen Service, a company affiliated with the Armed Forces' National Service Authority (Gihāz al-Khidma al-Waṭaniyya) won the tender to manage, operate and maintain the EGP 530 million garage (Arab Finance, 2015). The 20-kilometer square, four-level underground parking can accommodate 1,700 vehicles, in addition to 24 tourist buses on the street level. This compliments `Umar Makram Parking Garage, the adjacent underground parking facility in Tahrir Square with a 600-vehicle capacity (Al Mal News, 2015, January 31). The Tahrir Garage's original design included a shopping mall and a cinema complex, which were disregarded during construction due to limited funding (Al Badil, 2014b), however the Governor has been reported to resurface the plans to develop the street level area of both Tahrir and `Umar Makram parking garages in April 2015 as a recreational area with restaurants and upscale cafés (Egyptian Streets, 2015).

To make it more convenient for those parking at Tahrir garage, the governorate allocated 21 buses to circulate three routes in downtown to connect commuters to their points of interest in downtown with the parking garage – the routes of the 3 shuttle bus lines are shown in Table 2. The shuttle buses are for the garage users only and costs EGP 1 and are supposed to run every 5 minutes from the garage. The concept of the shuttle buses is good in itself, however the buses only transport from the garage but do not offer the service for patrons to return to the garage, prompting them to walk back to their vehicle or use alternative transportation options.

Shuttle Bus Line	Downtown Route
Line 1	Tahrir Garage – Corniche – Abdel Min'im Riad Square – Ma'ruf St. – Abdel Khaliq Tharwat St. – Tal'at Harb Square – Tahrir Garage.
Line 2	Tahrir Garage – Corniche – Bab Al-Luq – Abdin Square – Mohamed Farid St. – Tal'at Harb Square – Tahrir Garage.
Line 3	Tahrir Garage – Corniche – Bab Al-Luq – Abdin Square – Soliman Basha St. – 26 <sup>th</sup> July St. – Tal'at Harb Square – Tahrir Garage.

**Table 2: Shuttle bus routes provided by Tahrir Garage to connect users to different points in downtown**

The issue that garnered the most criticism with the Tahrir garage is the high parking fees, particularly for those who work in downtown and need to leave their vehicles for over 8 hours or those who live in downtown that have to park overnight. The garage offers monthly memberships that cost EGP 400 and discounted EGP 350 for residents (with additional EGP 100 reduction for residents with multiple vehicles). However compared to the mid-income level of those residing and working in downtown and the previous amount they would pay (approximately EGP 100-150 per month) it is still economically unfeasible for many.

### 3.2. National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH)

After decades of neglect, in the 1990s the state showed interest in belle époque Cairo after numerous lobbying efforts of heritage experts to protect the deterioration and demolition of significant architectural gems in downtown. These lobbying efforts stemmed from a sense of nostalgia of the “enlightened’ state intellectuals” (Abaza, 2011, p. 1078) to “what is perceived as Cairo’s golden period” (Sims, 2012, p. 14). These

“enlightened” elites are nostalgic for the “Paris on the Nile” and are known for their disdain for the social and economic changes that took place in downtown over the past six decades. Sims also points out the irony that those advocating for the return of the belle époque, Cosmopolitan Cairo are feeling a sense of nostalgia for something they never experienced, as none of them actually experienced Cairo in the pre-1952 era (2012). Nonetheless, this campaign resulted in the renovation of some buildings and their inclusion into the national list of historic monuments (ElKadi & ElKerdany, 2006), as well as the pedestrianization of two areas in downtown, Shirīfayn St. – known as al-Būrṣa (Stock Exchange) area, and al-Alfī St., both which became a popular hangout area for street cafes (Abaza, 2009).

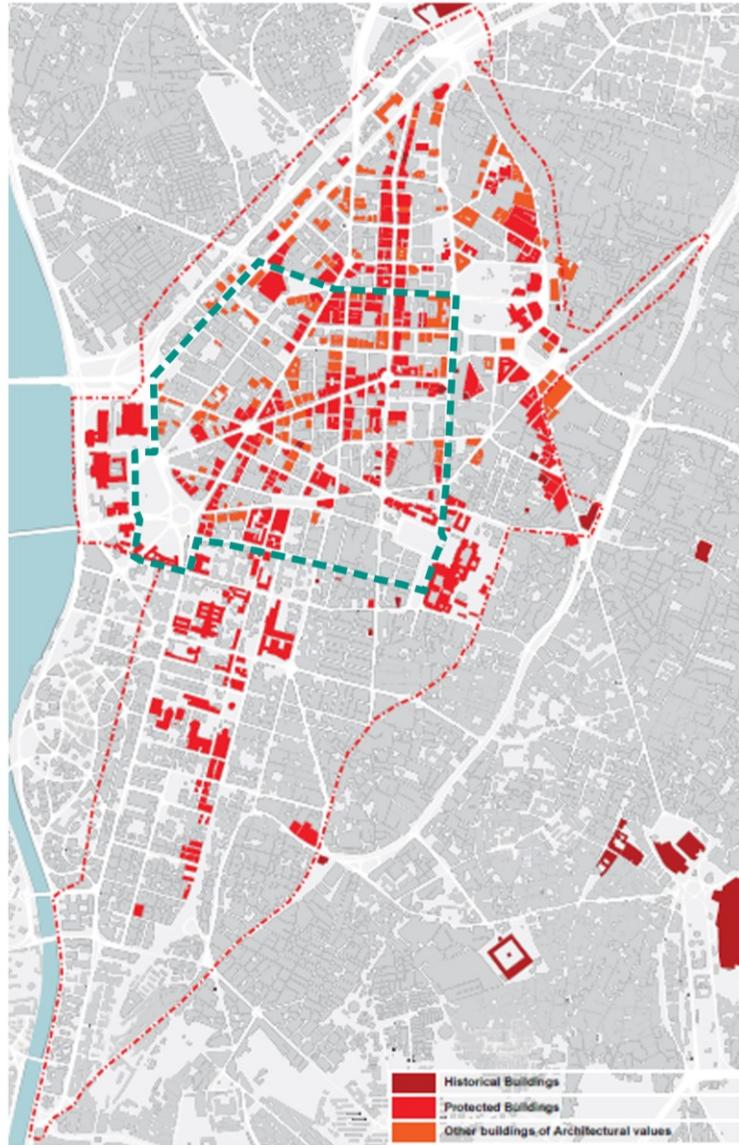
The Ministry of Culture is the government institution that became most interested in the deteriorated city center (Abaza, 2009), and National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) was subsequently established in 2001 by Presidential Decree No. (37/2001) as a subsidiary to the Ministry with the mandate to ensure the implementation of aesthetic values in the design of public spaces and the exterior of buildings, particularly those of historic and heritage significance (Article 2). As such, NOUH is the entity that approves any renovation to buildings of historic/heritage significance, and has been involved in that capacity as a main partner in all state development attempts in downtown Cairo over the past 15 years. However according to Article 11 of Law No. (144/2006) NOUH does not possess the executive power to halt transgressions against heritage and historic buildings. Its mandate is to report transgressions to the local executive authority (governorate or city/village administration) to take the necessary steps to stop illegal renovations or demolitions. The Unified Building Law, Law No. (119/2008) articles 29-

36 further elaborate the mandate of NOUH, such as establishing and supervising the implementation of urban upgrading projects in certain areas (Article 30), and designating certain areas as architecturally significant areas (Article 33).

NOUH is most known for the international competitions it sponsored with the governorate and the GOPP for “the urban redesign and preservation of historical value of the Opera and Ataba Squares” in June 2010 (NOUH, n.d.), and the “revitalization and upgrading of the central zone of Khedival’s Cairo” that presented a new vision for Khedival Cairo as a whole. These competitions though they were highly publicized, never reached the implementation stage, because the winning entries were not picked up by the implementing authorities – the governorate – NOUH as an entity sets regulations for and approves development but does not carry out implementation itself (NOUH, 2011).

Khedival Cairo has been designated by NOUH as a protected area due to the extensive number of heritage buildings within its boundaries. The NOUH also established a listing of buildings of historic/heritage significance, even if they do not reach the 100-year mark that constitutes a historic monument building protected by law. The buildings are selected if they are architecturally significant, housed a historical figure or event and are approved by the Prime Minister (Attalah, 2010). Law No. (144/2006) prohibits the issuance of demolition permissions for these buildings (Article 1) and sets the punishment for unauthorized demolitions a fine of up to EGP 5 million and a maximum of 5 years in prison (Article 12). Article 3 of the aforementioned law gives the state the right to finance and perform the renovation of the external façade of these buildings and perform internal structural maintenance with prior notice to property owners/tenants. This article is

utilized for the governorate's current development project in downtown. ACE compiled the list of heritage buildings in 2010 – shown in Figure 11 – which clearly illustrates the extensive number of heritage buildings in the study area.



**Figure 11: NOUH's historic and protected buildings in downtown and surrounding areas (ACE, 2010)<sup>11</sup>**

<sup>11</sup> ACE mapped NOUH's listed historic and protected buildings in downtown for its competition entry (discussed in the next subsection). The study area boundary was superimposed on ACE's map.

### 3.3. Misr Real Estate Assets (MREA)

Misr Real Estate Assets (MREA) is a subsidiary of Misr Insurance Holding Company (MIHC). MIHC is a publicly owned enterprise that was created in 2006 to be a parent company for the different state insurance companies. MIHC consolidated three of the companies: Misr Insurance, Sharq Insurance, and the Egyptian Company for Reinsurance, into Misr Insurance. MIHC currently has three subsidiary companies: Misr Insurance, Misr Life Insurance, and MREA. MREA was established in 2007 by an Investment Ministerial Decree No. (53/2007) to manage the real estate properties and investments owned by MIHC and its subsidiaries. MREA owns and manages more than 140 real estate properties in downtown, 68 of which are of “architecturally distinct” (thū ṭābi` mi`mārī mutamayyiz). By law, MREA is not allowed to sell the architecturally distinct properties, and as such it manages the properties, all of which are occupied under lease agreements. The records of occupancy types in these properties is not publicly available, however, according to Eng. Akram Ismail, the General Manager for the General Administration of Historic Properties, estimates that over 60% are occupied under old rent agreements, which garner minimal returns (A. Ismail, personal communication, March 31, 2015). Also, according to Ismail, unlike many other properties in downtown, MREA managed buildings have almost 100% occupancy. Although the exact occupancy rates for downtown is not available, MREA’s website has the statistic for its properties in Cairo and Giza governorates and it is compatible with Ismail’s claim, at a 97% occupancy rate (MREA, n.d.). This contrasts with the overall low residential occupancy rate in downtown that has dropped 60% over the past 50 years (2006 census figures compared to 1960 occupancy) (I2UD & Zakaria, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, MREA was a partner with the governorate in the first downtown development project in 2010. According to Eng. Ismail, unlike the current development project, MREA did not contribute financially to the 2010 development efforts. It was involved in the BTHC and was consulted on the planning process and logistics, in addition to supervising renovations that were being performed on their properties – particularly the buildings overlooking Tal`at Harb Square – five of the seven buildings overlooking the square are owned by MREA (A. Ismail, personal communication, March 31, 2015). MREA was also involved in the restoration process. In the ongoing development project, MREA is committing EGP 15 million on the renovation and upgrading of their properties that are in the areas selected for development to be allocated over the next two fiscal years. MREA buildings’ are being externally renovated and internal structural issues are also being addressed (A. Ismail, personal communication, March 31, 2015).

Prior to the establishment of MREA each insurance company managed its own properties, and in the mid-2000s Misr Insurance Company offered some of its units in downtown for long-term lease agreements at lower than market prices under the condition that the occupant renovates and upgrades it. Interest of artists to live in downtown was increasing during this time and several writers and artists capitalized this opportunity (W. Wells, personal communication, February 25, 2015).

### **3.4. National Influences**

In addition to the direct interventions and projects implemented in downtown by the government, there are several influences that emanated from the national level but influenced downtown directly. These can be divided into two types: legislative, and

mega-development projects. Two legislations that had a significant impact on downtown are the controlled rent legislations Law No. (49/1977) and No. (136/1981), known as “the old rent laws”, and Law No. (107/2013) that organizes the right to protest, known publicly as “the anti-protest law”. On the other hand, the government’s highly criticized Cairo 2050 urban development vision for Cairo included a development proposal for downtown, and more recently the new Capital City – the administrative and business center 60 km East of Cairo. Both projects have not been implemented yet, however if they do materialize, they will have a significant impact on the highly securitized downtown.

### ***3.4.1. Legislative Authority - Controlled Rent Legislation***

The majority of rented residential and commercial units in downtown Cairo are governed by the rent control law. The law was introduced by Nasser as part of the social welfare state to protect mid- and low-income families from inflation costs infiltrating the cost of housing and reinforce the image of the state setting the welfare of average Egyptian as the highest priority (McCall, 1988). Several legislations were introduced during Nasser’s presidency that not only froze rent but also implemented up to 35% rent reductions (McCall, 1988).<sup>12</sup> The legislation that governs rent agreements are based on Law No. (52/1969), amended by Law No. (49/1977) and later by Law No. (136/1981), both which further protect tenants from eviction or termination of rent agreement unless the property is deemed structurally unsound and received a demolition decree (Articles 77 and 19 of the abovementioned laws respectively). Article 29 Law No. (49/1977) states that the

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<sup>12</sup> Five laws were introduced during Nasser’s presidency that governed rent agreements; Law No. (199/1952), No. (55/1958), No. (168/1961), No. (7/1965), No. (52/1969) (McCall, 1988, 158-160).

inheritance of rented units is transferred to next of kin, up to the second-degree relation, regardless if the unit is for housing or commercial purposes. Sadat's presidency did not reduce the restrictions on the relationship between tenant and owner; on the contrary Law No. (136/1981) gave tenants the right to exchange tenancy of a unit without the approval of the owner. These laws secured tenants against hiked prices and evictions, however the increasing gap between the rents collected by the property owner on the one hand, and annual inflation and the market price of the units on the other was a disincentive for owners to maintain the buildings and its infrastructure – the result of which is evident in the majority of old buildings in all of Cairo, not only downtown (Mansour, 2009).

During Mubarak's presidency the first law reform in favor of the property owner was introduced – Law No. (4/1996) eliminated the previous rent law agreements to units built after the law's issue date. However, this did not cause a dramatic shift in downtown Cairo, as most if not all buildings were built before that date, leaving the buildings decrepit and unmaintained. The following year, Law No. (6/1997) restricted the inheritance of units to only first-degree next of kin in commercially used units, as long as it retains the commercial activity (Article 2). The rent control also made it financially feasible for many to hold on to their rent agreements, keeping it vacant in case it is needed in the future, while residing in a different apartment in a nicer area in Cairo or leave the country all together. This contributed to the high vacancy rate in downtown units, negatively impacting the social function of property in downtown (K. Ibrahim, personal communication, March 20, 2015).

Property owners have been attempting to change the rent law for decades, one lobby group, The Right to Property Association, announced recently that since the Egyptian

government has been neglecting their rights for almost 50 years it will take the issue to the European Court of Human Rights to increase international pressure on the government to reform what they call an “unconstitutional colonialization of their properties” (Galal, 2015). The government recognizes the negative implications of the old rent law on the real estate market and the utilization of units and different cabinets drafted several laws to remove some of the restrictions of the old rent law, however it never materialized due to fear of public backlash. The latest attempt to redraft the law is currently being reviewed by a committee organized by the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development (Hamza, 2015).

#### ***3.4.2. Legislative Authority - Anti-Protest Law***

In addition to erecting the martyr’s monument in Tahrir Square, November 2013 also was the month in which Interim President Adly Mansour signed Law No. (107/2013) “Organization of the right to public meetings, parades, and peaceful protests” – publicly known as the “anti-protest” law. This law came in the wake of months of protests across the country following the death of almost 500 people during the dispersal of pro-Morsi sit-ins in August of that year. The anti-protest law requires protestors to get approval from the local police station before holding a protest, and gives the police the right to revoke the approval as long as it gives the protestors 24-hour notice (Articles 8 and 10). Violators can be imprisoned for 2-7 years and fined up to EGP 300,000 (Articles 17 and 19). This legislation garnered a lot of criticism and condemnation, many young people protested against the anti-protest law in late 2013. The security forces to affirm the contested legislation, arrested many protesters and dispersed the protests. In 2014, 23 protestors, including prominent activists, were sentenced to three years in prison and 3

years of police surveillance and a fine of EGP 10,000 (FIDH, 2014).<sup>13</sup> The state’s “iron fist” in dealing with these protestors quenched potential protests across the country, and particularly in downtown. Downtown Cairo returned to being quiet on Friday afternoons after 3 years of being informally designated for protests and the occasional clashes between protestors and police. The anti-protest law is used as a tool for the state to reaffirm its power over the political and urban space in addition to the physical barriers introduced after the 2011 revolution and as Marcuse (2006) puts it, act as a legitimate limitation on the political use of public space.

### ***3.4.3. Ministry of Housing – Cairo 2050 Vision for Cairo***

No discussion of the future of Cairo is complete without referring to the infamous Cairo 2050 Vision proposed by the GOPP – the urban planning arm of the Ministry of Housing – that was leaked to the public in 2008 (GOPP, 2010). Cairo 2050 envisioned a Cairo that is abundant with wide boulevards, vast green urban spaces, public plazas and skyscrapers. The Egyptian State’s Cairo 2050 plan is an example where the beautification and modernization of the city is adopted (not quite implemented as a whole yet) as the national policy to attract tourists and investors, despite resulting in the potential displacement of millions of Cairenes. The Strategic Urban Development Plan for Greater Cairo (known as Cairo 2050) was announced in late 2008 by the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP) and offered a vision for the Greater Cairo Region that would transform it into a “World City” and a hub for technology, industry, trade, professional activity, etc. and the development plan that will materialize that objective

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<sup>13</sup> An appeals court later lowered the sentencing to 2 years in prison and 2 years of police surveillance, in addition to a EGP 10,000 fine (FIDH, 2014).

(Hamilton et al., 2012). The projects associated with Cairo 2050 include relocating government buildings from the downtown core to a new government district, and creating large-scale public parks around historic Cairo (TADAMUN, 2014b). The announced strategic urban development vision of the Cairo 2050 plan for Greater Cairo was based on maximizing the economic potential of lowly-utilized parcels of real estate in different parts of Cairo and profiting from the downtown real estate values (GOPP, 2010).

One of the main criticism points of Cairo 2050 plans from urban planners and experts is that once the city goes through this transformation, it will be an enclave of skyscrapers and facilities targeting high-income individuals and the average middle and lower-income Egyptians, who are essential to the city's sustainability and operation, will not be able to afford life in the city and will eventually be forced to relocate as well (TADAMUN 2014). Previous tourism-centric urban upgrading projects implemented by the state apparatus proved to be socially exclusive and highly securitized (Salama 2009), intimidating if not outright prohibiting visitors who do not seem to fit into the imagery. Ironically, Cairo 2050 vision was not only backed by the government but also gained the support of international development agencies, such as the UNHABITAT which offered technical support and legitimacy to the project (TADAMUN 2015). The issue with the state's development vision is that it does not adopt a holistic approach, rather it is centered on enhancing the tourist experience to maximize tangible financial returns as opposed to developing for citizens who do not always reap these benefits. On the contrary, the marginalized are the ones often directly harmed through forced relocations and loss of means of livelihood. The public is often aware of this and is distrustful of government promises of prosperity (Salama 2009). None of these plans have seen the

light as the 2011 revolution put a halt to the Cairo 2050 plans. In 2012 the GOPP renamed Cairo 2050 vision to the Cairo Urban Strategic Development Vision (CSUDV), however no steps have been taken to implement ACE's vision of downtown Cairo yet.

Coming back to downtown Cairo, as mentioned earlier, the GOPP sponsored an international competition with NOUH and the Cairo governorate in 2010 for a revitalization of Khedival Cairo. This competition was won by Associated Consultants Egypt (ACE), managed by Dr. Sahar Attia – Architect, urban planner and the Head of Cairo University's Architecture Department – in partnership with AECOM (a large American-based design company). Dr. Attia's winning entry was to be included in the Cairo 2050 vision, and proposed an urban transformation of downtown Cairo that included the pedestrianization of numerous streets and the introduction of green spaces and plazas at pivotal points, in addition to creating more pedestrian connections to the left bank of the Nile. The proposal, shown in Figure 12 and key projects shown in Figure 13, focused on upgrading focal points in Khedival Cairo, such as Tahrīr, Opera, and `Abdīn, Squares, in addition to the vicinity of the Supreme Court, which is currently overseeing a vehicle parking garage. One of the main features of the proposal is increased mobility in downtown through pedestrian-only streets, tram systems and transferring some section of vehicular traffic along the Nile Corniche through a tunnel to create a public space between downtown and the Nile (ACE, 2010). In an interview, Dr. Mostafa Madbouly, the Head of GOPP at the time and the current Minister of Housing, projected that ACE's proposal would be implemented within 10-15 years (Bradley, 2010).

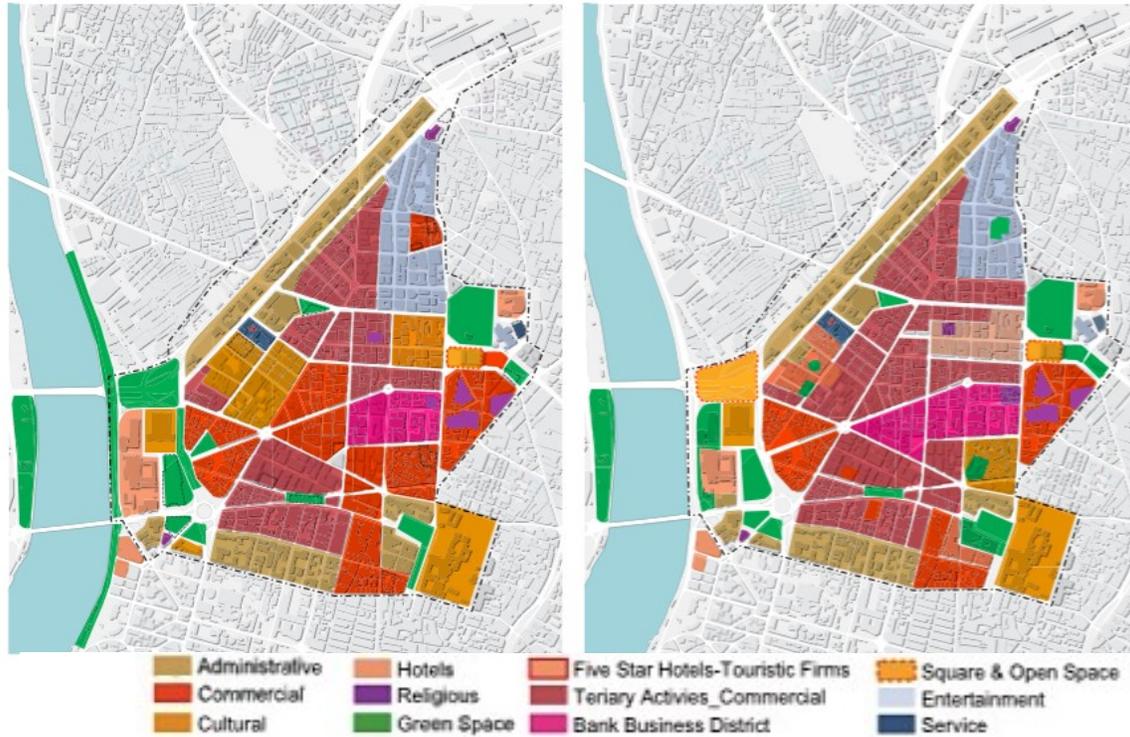


Figure 12: ACE winning entry: proposed land use for downtown Cairo (ACE, 2010)

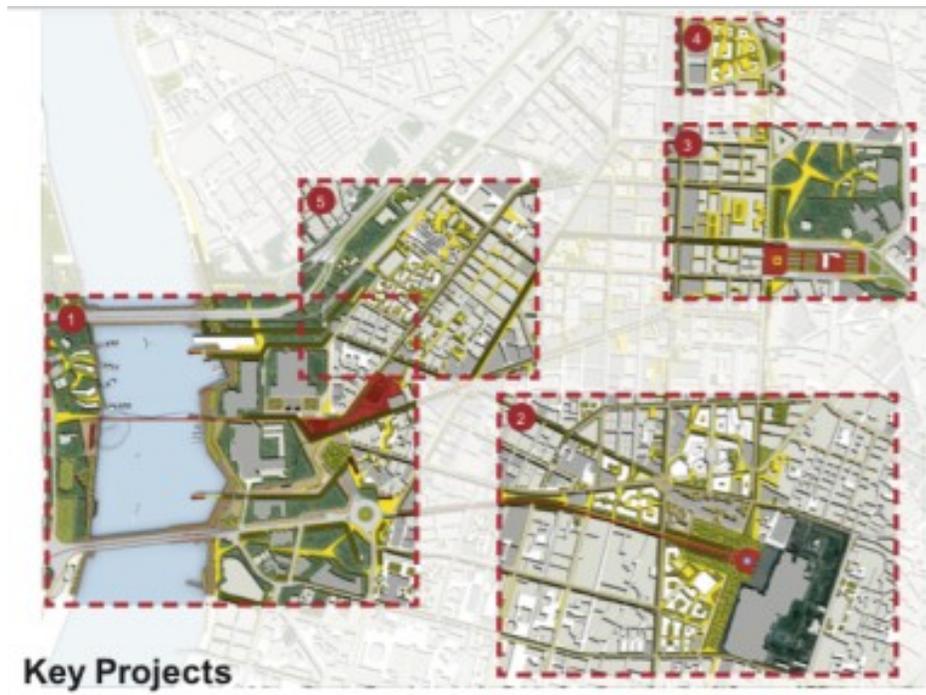


Figure 13: ACE winning entry: proposed key projects in Khedival Cairo. (1) Nile Corniche and Tahrir Square, (2) Supreme Court area, (3) Opera Square, (4) al-Alfi Street, and (5) Abdin Square (ACE, 2010).

However, this was before the 2011 revolution that put a halt to all plans. As mentioned earlier, all Cairo 2050-related projects were put on hold due to extensive criticism from planners and urbanists and rights-based organizations, such as Habitat International Coalition that issued a public statement in 2010 against Cairo 2050 and the negative social impacts of the expected consequent.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, in 2014 the Executive Committee for the Khedival Cairo Development Project consulted with Dr. Attia and drew inspiration from her proposal for the selection of the intervention sites for the pilot projects, and she recommended al-Alfi Street and `Abdīn Square as “quick wins” particularly after the relocation of street vendors from downtown. However, the current development project is not entirely based on her entry (S. Attia, personal communication, February 23, 2015).

### ***3.4.3. Ministry of Housing – New Capital City***

Relocating the state’s administrative bodies from downtown Cairo has been center news since Egypt Economic Development Conference (EEDC), “Egypt the Future”, in March 2015, where President Sisi along with Mohamed Alabbar (CEO of Emaar, Dubai and one of the world’s leading real estate developers) presented the plan for the new capital city (yet to be named) and announced the first phase of the city will be completed within four years – see Figure 12. However, the dream of escaping downtown Cairo is nothing new, with Nasser’s vision for Naṣr City, the eastern suburb in Cairo planned in 1958, to be the new center of government (Cairoobserver, 2015, March 23). But the dream failed, with only a handful of administrations taking home in the new suburb. President Sadat

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<sup>14</sup> For more analysis on the development of Cairo 2050 and its resurfacing after the 2011 revolution, see TADAMUN’s “Cairo 2050 Revisited” series of articles available at <http://www.tadamun.info/category/urban-issues/?lang=en> (accessed April 10, 2015).

reintroduced the idea with Sādāt City in 1978, a new city to be constructed the same size as Cairo, 100 kilometers northwest of Cairo on the Cairo-Alexandria road. A large amount of public investments were directed to constructing the new city and government buildings, however to-be-relocated public employees opposed the relocation and threatened to strike (Sims, 2012), this partnered with Sadat’s assassination in 1981 put a halt to the relocation of the administration. The city then evolved into an industrial and agricultural city with 40,000 people (Monofeya Governorate, n.d.).

Decades later, the Mubarak administration revisited the idea with the new “Ministerial Square” (moraba’ alwizarat) in 2008, part of the Cairo 2050 vision. The square was to be relocated along the Ring Road, across from Katameya Heights (exclusive housing compound in New Cairo) and for the currently used 2-kilometer square block in downtown to be reused for touristic, cultural and entertainment purposes (Abu El Ela, 2007; Saleh, 2010). Mubarak’s plan was halted because of the 2011 revolution, but resurfaced in 2013 with the revival of the Cairo 2050 – now called Cairo Strategic Urban Development Vision – (Abd El-Hafez, 2014). In 2014, community consultation sessions were organized by the GOPP and UN-HABITAT, one of which addressed the potential socio-economic impacts of the ministerial square (GOPP, 2015). Although these are “community” sessions, they are invitation-only events, the outcomes of which are not disclosed to the public, at least not at the time of writing; almost a year after the session was held (TADAMUN, 2014c).



**Figure 14: Advertisements of the new Capital City uncovered during the March 2015 Egypt Economic Development Conference. (photo credit: Capital Cairo)**

The new administrative capital city proposal first surfaced in July 2014 during a press conference (Figure 14) held by Minister of Housing, Mostafa Madbouly, to be built 60 kms from Cairo engulfed between the Suez and 'Ayn al-Sukhna roads to the East of Cairo (Al Badil, 2014a). However its real public appearance was in March 2015 during the economic development conference, where it received significant attention, particularly with the city master plan presented and Alabbar announcing his involvement in the project through Capital City Partners, a private real estate investment fund established to finance and develop the new city development (Capital City, 2015). The development of the 700-kilometer square (km<sup>2</sup>) city is estimated to cost USD 85 billion with a target population of 5 million people. The first phase of the new city development will be the development of a 100 km<sup>2</sup> area within four years time with an estimated cost of USD 25 billion, as announced by Alabbar and Madbouly in separate interviews (Bhoynul, 2015; Holding Company for Water and Wastewater, 2015). In a television interview presenting

the new city, Madbouly reaffirmed the Mubarak-era vision of reusing the administration buildings in downtown Cairo for cultural spaces such as museums, hotels, as well as partnering with private sector to utilize the properties (Holding Company for Water and Wastewater, 2015). The new capital city garnered much criticism as well as support from architects, urban planners, historians, and journalists. Of relevance to the future of downtown and the city of Cairo is how this new development and the relocation of government centers from the city would impact public spending in Cairo. The new capital city is also criticized for the lack of public involvement and debate in this decision that impacts not only Cairenes but all Egyptians (Cairoobserver, 2015, March 14). It will also put to the test how far the government is willing to partner with the private sector or give way to its interests in downtown assets.

## **Chapter 4: Non-State Stakeholders: Real Estate Investors and Arts & Cultural Spaces**

This chapter examines real estate investors as well as arts and cultural spaces in downtown and their impact on the built environment and perception of downtown. As the literature review illustrated, there is often a strong relationship between these two stakeholder groups – this will be examined here in the case of downtown Cairo.

### **4.1. Private Real Estate Investors**

Mega-investments in the Egyptian real estate market have been geographically clustered in gated residential compounds in emerging satellite cities and beach resorts along the Mediterranean and Red Seas over the last twenty years. Al Ismaelia Real Estate Investment Company's founders, Aladdin Saba (co-founder of Beltone Financial) and Kareem Shafei (entrepreneur), went against that investment trend and established Ismaelia to purchase and renovate physically deteriorated yet architecturally and historically rich properties in the heart of Khedival Cairo. Their goal is to make these properties more attractive to higher-income residents, tourists and businesses by retrofitting the buildings for modern usages while preserving the external aesthetics, as well as the area as a whole, by revitalizing and supporting the arts and cultural function in downtown (Al-Ismaelia, 2015a).

The company was founded as an Egyptian private company, managed by Beltone Private Equity and Shafei as CEO, with a startup capital of USD 64 million. 31% of the capital was raised by Egyptian investors (29% Samih Sawiris, of Orascom Development, and 2% Beltone) and 67% raised by Saudi Arabian investors (40% Salman Albanamay, a Saudi investor and 27% Amwal Alkhaleej, a private equity firm based in Riyadh). The high

percentage of foreign investment in the company sparked controversy in the media due to the sensitive nature of the company's mission to purchase significant properties in an area of great symbolic and historic significance to Egyptians. Conspiracy theories of Israeli investors and plans to demolish the acquired buildings to build skyscrapers not only filled newspaper articles in 2009 and 2010, such as Mamdouh Hamza's article (Abaza, 2011), but also extended to controversial parliament member Mostafa Bakry sending a request for information to the Investment Minister to inquire on the sale of historic buildings to foreigners (Bawabet Shabab Ahram, 2010). This uneasiness towards the foreign capital in the company was also expressed during the interview conducted with MREA – Ismail expressed MREA's uneasiness towards the intentions of a foreign-funded company freezing hundreds of millions of Egyptian pounds of capital for years in real estate properties in downtown that are yet to yield mentionable returns (A. Ismail, personal communication, March 31, 2015).

Although unconventional in the Egyptian real estate market and a high-risk investment, this type of investments exists in other countries, targeting districts in prime real estate locations that are deteriorated or not used to maximum potential/capacity. Ismaelia's business model is simple enough – purchase real estate properties in downtown Cairo at lower than market prices due to their condition, offer tenants monetary sums to vacate the units, then renovate the building and units for upscale usages such as lofts, galleries, commercial centers, etc. The two main criteria for selecting buildings for purchase are that they are architecturally and preferably also historically or culturally significant (such as the Café Riche building or Cinema Radio), and for units not to be individually owned by tenants (these are less likely to vacate and negatively impacts the company's control

of the building) (A. Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015). A significant portion of the buildings they acquired were already utilized culturally or socially, or are of cultural significance, such as Café Riche, Cinema Radio, and the old French Consulate (S. Angarano, personal communication, March 23, 2015; W. Wells, personal communication, February 25, 2015). As of April 2015, the company owns 22 buildings, which utilized almost 70% of the company's capital to purchase, in addition to the maintenance and renovation of a number of the acquired buildings. Vacating units whose tenants are paying insignificant amounts is not an easy task, when Ismaelia first purchased their buildings, it controlled only 30% of the units, and seven years after the company was established it was able to double that figure to 60% (Helmi, 2015).

#### ***4.1.1. Plans for Downtown Development***

Ismaelia's vision for downtown is one that is a modern version of the belle époque Khedivian Cairo, when downtown was the city's metropolitan center for arts, culture, entertainment and commerce, a place where everyone feels welcomed – although that nostalgic view of downtown is not particularly historically accurate as it is known that lower socioeconomic groups were not allowed to wear traditional dress (gallabiyas) on the streets of downtown. It claims to want to do so without being a gentrifying agent and negatively impacting those residing in downtown from lower income groups for decades through the old rent agreements (A. Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015). Beirut's city center highly controversial development by Solidere is not the development model they are attaining. According to Helmi, "Solidere, from my point of view will economically fail because it's artificially supported and doesn't go according to dynamics of investments and ownership. Vacant space is bad for real estate." (A. Helmi, personal

communication, March 10, 2015). Even if property appreciation of vacant units is increasing, it will eventually drop. It flourishes when mutual benefit is found between different stakeholders (A. Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015).

The second significant obstacle is the absence of a body that speaks on behalf of all of non-government stakeholders in downtown – the property owners (which include companies such as Ismaelia and individual owners), tenants, business owners, and cultural and arts centers. They view the Board of Trustees of Historic Cairo (BTHC) as a step in the right direction in bringing different stakeholders together, but lacks the vision, interests and input of non-government ones. Inspired by the governorate’s board of trustees, Ismaelia has been attempting to establish a similar entity that includes the non-government stakeholders, particularly property owners, to collectively voice and lobby for their interests in downtown. The proposed board of trustees is based on the vision of creating a downtown business improvement district that manages the affairs of the area, and stems from Ismaelia’s belief that current government development projects are financially unsustainable and that there needs to be a mechanism for property owners to have the financial capability to maintain the buildings themselves (A. Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015). The composition of the proposed board is still being negotiated but currently they envision that it would include five committees: urban planning, investment, tourism, culture and arts, and funding – all of which would be managed by elected members. Ismaelia is proposing a mechanism to increase the board of trustees’ financial sustainability and capability to self-maintain their properties and contribute to the development of semi-public spaces surrounding them.

One of Ismaelia's proposals for the board is the introduction of additional fees subjected to commercial and business usages in downtown heritage buildings, separate from the rent collected, which would go directly to a fund managed by an elected body within the board that uses it for the maintenance and upgrading of properties and general development of the area (Helmi, 2015). They view this as a win-win-win situation where tenants have a commitment from landlords to maintain the crumbling buildings, landlords increase the value of their properties, and it removes some of the pressure from the government's already limited budget for downtown development. They reached this proposal to maneuver around the old rent law which is unlikely to be reformed on the short-term, and would require the involvement of government entities in the board to implement (A. Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015). The concept in itself is not significantly different than the government's funding process of the current development project, which involves financial contributions from tenants and businesses in the to-be renovated buildings, however it would lack the same legitimacy. However Ismaelia is yet to propose the technicality as to how this suggested fee would be enforced on commercial tenants. Not to mention the amount of the fee, which itself could be a gentrifying agent to low- and medium investment businesses in downtown if set outside the means of these establishments.

Gaining support for this very ambitious proposal is not an easy task, Ismaelia has already approached MREA with the idea, which according to Helmi seemed initially interested in the concept but attributed bureaucratic red tape and lack of incentive in the public sector to change the status quo to the absence of any follow up (A. Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015). On the other hand, Ismaelia has found an ally in fellow

private investor Ahmed El Alfi, a well known venture capitalist and whose company (Technology Alley Technology Park) rented the AUC Greek Campus compound in downtown 2013 to establish a tech startup hub, the GrEEK Campus (A. El Alfi, personal communication, April 5, 2015). The GrEEK Campus will be discussed in the following section. Ismaelia is still working on refining their idea before approaching the governorate.

#### ***4.1.2. Partnerships and Projects***

Ismaelia as a real estate investment company needed the expertise of planners, urban conservation experts and architects to better understand the nature of the complex urban context they were in and offer a range of technical solutions to jump start the development of their properties in the area. As they were purchasing their first buildings, they hired the Harvard affiliated Institute for International Development (I2UD), and Egyptian Architect and restoration consultant Mona Zakaria to conduct an urban study of Khedival Cairo, propose revitalization strategies and to assess the preservation potential, and recommend pilot projects.<sup>15</sup> The study, published in February 2011, provides baseline information of population trends, land usages and characteristics of housing stock (I2UD & Zakaria, 2011).

More importantly it identifies three intervention strategies for the improvement of downtown – the first two are related to pedestrian traffic and its utilization to attract more vibrant cultural and commercial usages, particularly through the upgrading of the existent public alleyways/passages, and increasing the width of sidewalks in high pedestrian flow

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<sup>15</sup> The assessment report is available on Ismaelia's website <http://al-ismaelia.com/urban/urban-planning-introduction/> (accessed 10 April, 2015)

areas connecting downtown's three metro stations, parking facilities and commercial areas. The third strategic intervention proposed is a straightforward one, façade renovation and maintenance of historic buildings' structural integrity. It finally proposed the design of a pilot project to assess the feasibility of the above strategies and selected the area between Hotel Viennoise and Cinema Radio, both owned by Ismaelia (I2UD & Zakaria, 2011).

The 2011 revolution and subsequent political turbulence in the country and particularly downtown put a hold on the company's acquisitions and major upgrading plans for at least two years. However, Ismaelia started engaging with the arts and culture community in downtown to found an annual spring downtown contemporary arts festival in downtown (D-CAF) in 2012. Shafei reached out to Studio Emad Eddin Foundation's founder Ahmed El-Attar to establish the festival, which in April 2015 completed its fourth edition. Ismaelia as a cofounder of the festival offered financial support and more importantly some of their distinguished properties for exhibitions and performances, such as Hotel Viennoise, Kodak building, the old French Consulate building, and others. D-CAF and its interaction with and impact on downtown will be discussed in the following chapter.

On another front, Ismaelia has utilized the architectural and urban planning expertise of an emerging architectural research and design firm based in downtown, CLUSTER – Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research. CLUSTER had conducted mapping exercises of some of downtown's passages and Ismaelia capitalized on that common interest to develop a detailed mapping of the passages, their current usages and propose design interventions for optimized usage of the spaces. This project

then evolved into creating a guided downtown walking tour (D-Tour) to be sponsored by Ismaelia. The tour is designed to attract more tourists and Egyptians to the historical and interesting buildings and spaces in downtown as well cultural and arts spaces (A. Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015). The D-Tour is divided into two tours; a history-centric tour, “the Tawfiqia Tour”, and another that showcases the reinvention of downtown, “the Ismaelia Tour”, which highlights Ismaelia’s vision for the future of downtown and the company-owned buildings (M. Adel, personal communication, March 19, 2015).<sup>16</sup>

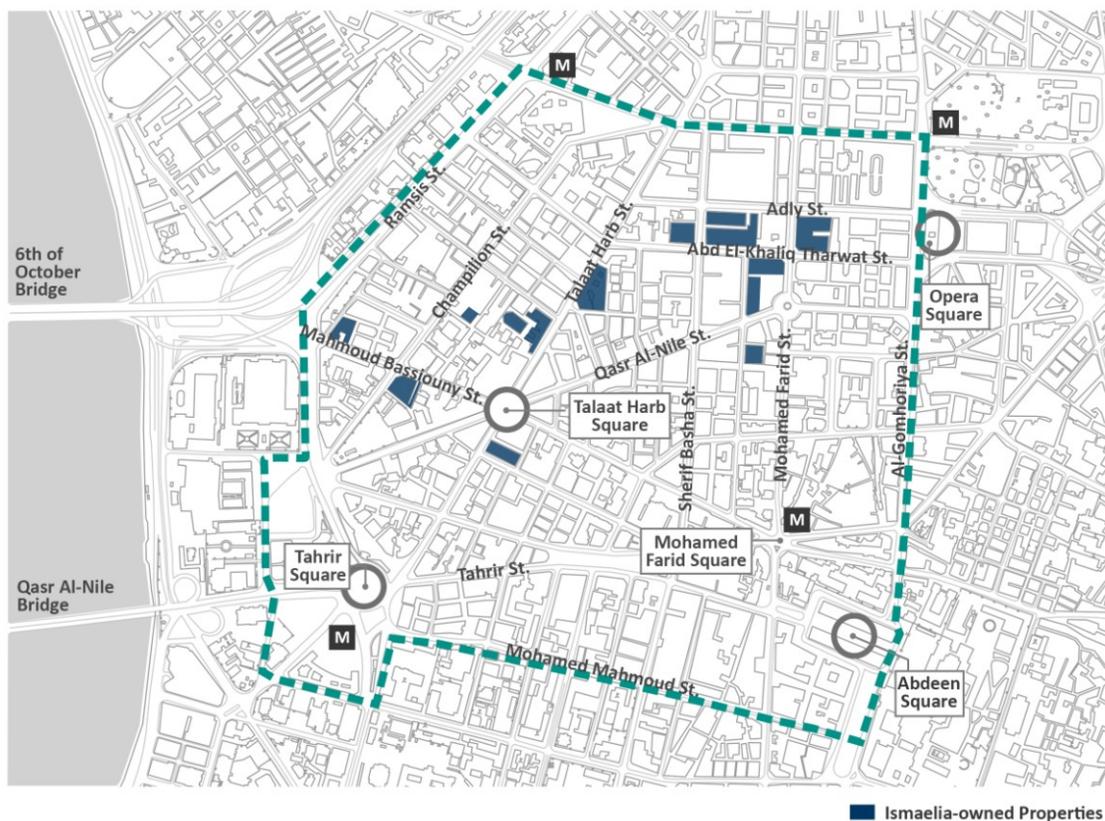
#### ***4.1.3. Ismaelia Projects in Downtown***

As mentioned earlier, Ismaelia has acquired 22 buildings in downtown, which are shown in Figure 15. One of the most significant adaptive reuse and renovation projects they have completed is the Cinema Radio building. Cinema Radio, built in the 1930s and inspired by New York City’s Radio City Hall, was one of the premier entertainment venues in the first half of the twentieth century. The 1600-seat theatre was divided into two theatres. In 2012 the newly renovated lower level was used as the studio for Bassem Youssef’s political satire television show, *Albernameg*, up to mid 2014 when the show was cancelled. The space remained unused for almost a year (April 2015) till a new television satirical show, *Abla Fahita*, rented it for its live audience show. The top level of Cinema Radio is yet to be utilized, Ismaelia considered its usage as an alternative film theatre, however, negotiations with Zawya Cinema (an art-house cinema theatre in downtown) were not successful due to the high cost associated with relocating from their current location in Odeon Cinema (Y. El Shazli, personal communication, March 26,

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<sup>16</sup> According to Helmi (2015), D-Tour is scheduled to start in the summer/fall 2015.

2015). Ismaelia is currently studying with Misr International Films the feasibility of utilizing the top level for an IMAX cinema screen (Y. El Shazli, personal communication, March 26, 2015). The future of that significant space is not clear yet, but as can be seen from the contenders so far, Ismaelia is attempting to retain the entertainment aspect of the building, however the final concept will depend on the operator (A. Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015).



**Figure 15: Ismaelia-owned properties in Khedival Cairo (base map (CAPMAS, 2006))**

Ismaelia in its efforts to attract “good traffic” to downtown and increase the artistic and cultural buzz, has shown support to various artists and art spaces centered in the area (A. Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015). Townhouse Gallery, arguably one of downtown Cairo’s most known contemporary art spaces situated behind Cinema Radio,

is able to afford its large exhibition space, the Townhouse Factory, which was acquired by Ismaelia in 2010, through a subsidized long-term lease agreement (W. Wells, personal communication, February 25, 2015). Ismaelia offers lower-than-market-price rental, and at times free rent, to some starting artists, NGOs and startups, which include organizations such as Contemporary Image Collective (an independent photography and art initiative), and for arts exhibitions and D-CAF to use spaces such as Hotel Viennoise, Kodak building retail spaces, and the old French Consulate. It also offers financial support to publications that promote downtown's current issues, history and architectural significance, such as the arts and culture page in the downtown hyperlocal monthly newspaper Mantiqity, and Cairoobserver's downtown-centric third print publication,<sup>17</sup> as well as several art exhibitions in 2010/2011 (Al-Ismaelia, 2015b). This is not a philanthropist endeavor on Ismaelia's behalf. To them this is a business strategy to garner more interest and demand for units in downtown from the "creative types" that not only could become long-term tenants, but will also attract others in their field to operate in downtown and maybe even reside (A. Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015).

With the exception of the renovation of Cinema Radio, Ismaelia has held off significant renovation or full-time utilization of their properties since the 2011 revolution due to the unstable political environment, and the security and safety ramifications in downtown. The relatively more stable political environment over the past year has encouraged them to aggressively implement that objective. Ismaelia is planning to launch 14 renovation and adaptive reuse projects over the next 5 years, which range from modernized office spaces, restaurants, and even potentially serviced apartments and medical centers (A.

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<sup>17</sup> Cairoobserver is an online blog founded in 2011 by Mohamed El-Shahed that discusses urban issues, architecture and history. [www.cairoobserver.com](http://www.cairoobserver.com)

Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015). To lower the startup cost and financial risk for potential investors, Ismaelia will cover the costs of retrofitting the spaces for these usages; investing a small capital to prove the concept. The first project to launch will be a small restaurant complex in the Kodak building exhibition space across from the newly renovated Kodak passage that will target young professionals who work in downtown or frequent visitors of the art establishments. The concept will be a smaller yet similar example to other multi-dining establishments with a common seating area that have become popular in Cairo over the past 10 years, with the addition of live music and the hosting of works of art and exhibitions. Restaurants have already signed their lease contracts and renovation is currently underway for an expected opening in the summer of 2015. According to Helmi, Ismaelia selected restaurants that offer a reasonably priced menu that cater to those who already frequent downtown for work or arts exhibitions, etc. (A. Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015). However, the restaurants to open have branches in other upscale parts of the city such as shopping malls and Zamalek, with average meals costing EGP 100-150, catering to high-income clientele.

## **4.2. Emerging Arts and Cultural Spaces in Downtown**

### ***4.2.1. Contemporary Art Spaces***

Downtown Cairo has always been a center for the arts and entertainment, with a high concentration of theatres and cinemas that were very popular with high society in the first half of the last century, and numerous cafés and bars were – and still are – meeting points for intellectuals and writers, such as renowned writers Taha Hussein and Naguib Mahfouz as well as poet Salah Jahin (Waly, 2013) and more current ones such as the late Ahmed Foad Negm, the famous poet. Jacquemond & Tresilian (2008) and Mehrez (2010,

2011) examine downtown Cairo through its rich literary history and its depiction in popular literary works. On the other hand, the visual arts were/are also heavily represented in downtown spaces. Over the past fifteen years there has been an emergence of art spaces and galleries, such as Townhouse Gallery and Contemporary Image Collective (CIC), Mashrabia Gallery and many others, however there are art galleries that predate this new wave of art spaces, such as L'Atelier Art Gallery and Karim Francis. Up until 2000 the visual arts were confined to private galleries, but this changed in December of that year with al-Nitaq Contemporary Arts Festival organized by Townhouse Gallery, Mashrabia and Karim Francis galleries (Azimi, 2004).

Al-Nitaq attempted to expand beyond art's "elitist private gallery audience to the streets of downtown Cairo, the lobbies of its buildings, its narrow lanes, cafes, restaurants, apartments and shop windows, to further increase the accessibility of contemporary art and reach a wider public" (Francis, 2013). This was the first time in recent history that uncensored arts were performed to the public directly in the streets, in abandoned buildings and narrow alleyways scattered over a 1-kilometer radius downtown Cairo. Al-Nitaq's second edition in 2001 was the first time Hotel Viennoise was used for an art exhibition, and Townhouse managed the building as an exhibition space afterwards from 2001-2008 until Ismaelia purchased the building (Cairoobserver, 2015, April 6). Al-Nitaq's 2001 festival was significant as it also attracted those attending the state's Briennale at the Opera grounds happening at the same time (W. Wells, personal communication, February 25, 2015). Unfortunately al-Nitaq was discontinued after the second year due to collaboration issues between the founders, but in 2008 a one-time festival "The Long Short Cut", a collaboration between several arts spaces, galleries and

cultural centers showcasing different forms of visual arts, installations, films, took place in downtown (Abaza, 2011). Despite its short life, one can say that Al-Nitaq triggered the imagination of many within the art community to experiment with more interactive and “pop-up” art expressions in downtown (W. Wells, personal communication, February 25, 2015).

D-CAF, the Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival, started as an annual festival in 2011 inspired by al-Nitaq and is now on its fourth edition. The festival’s main sponsor is Ismaelia and it is designed and executed by El Attar, with a vision to bring contemporary art into everyday urban spaces in downtown and to a diversity of people through its street performances in the Urban Visions program (Cairoobserver, 2014, March 24). It succeeded over the last four years to become one of the anticipated art festivals in Cairo for those already interested in the arts, however D-CAF received criticisms on their limited socioeconomic and cultural inclusion efforts, resulting in “the ‘usual’ D-CAF attendees: artists, downtown regulars, D-CAF staff and friends, embassy and cultural centre personnel, and foreigners... the audience, the performance and the venues seemed to be out of sync” (Balata, 2015). This was evident in the fact that even according to those in the downtown arts and culture scene, the majority of downtown users were not particularly aware that an extensive three-week open arts festival was happening (Y. El Shazli, personal communication, March 26, 2015); S. Angarano, personal communication, March 25, 2015; W. Wells, personal communication, February 25, 2015). The festivals’ posters overflow the passages and side streets of downtown, however they are not designed to attract the average Egyptian, but rather the art aficionados. Citizen engagement and outreach was further hindered by D-CAF not being

able to secure permission from the state to perform in the Borsa pedestrian area, as they have over the past two years. According to El Attar, this was due to a recent change in the regulations and procedures for obtaining the permission which was not known to organizers, leaving them with little time to reapply in time for the scheduled performance (A. El Attar, personal communication, April 7, 2015). This resulted in the Urban Visions program to take place inside the GrEEK Campus' open area, which to average downtown users is still considered an inaccessible space (Balata, 2015). The disconnect with the general audience during street performances in previous years was also a criticism of previous years' events, whether through the content or type of performance, or the level of interaction with them (Cugusi, 2014). William Wells, the founder of Townhouse, sees it closer to a "pop-up" festival with the city and the people as a "backdrop" than an interactive festival with its surrounding (W. Wells, personal communication, February 25, 2015).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Note that although Wells was one of the cofounders of Al Nitaq festival, he is not involved in the development of D-CAF. Townhouse however does offer Rawabet Theatre to some D-CAF performances.



Figure 16: Posters of D-CAF 2012-2015 (photo credit: D-CAF)

#### 4.2.2. Art Cinema

The independent film culture has been gaining popularity over the past ten years in Egypt, gradually attracting more people than the few who would seek out such screenings in foreign-funded cultural centers and embassies' cultural attaches. Misr International Films (MIF) Production Company established an independent European film festival in 2004, which became a highly anticipated yearly event for foreign film enthusiasts, and inspired the creation of Zawya, an art-house cinema to screen independent films all-year-round. Zawya decided to have its theatre in downtown for several reasons: first downtown already had numerous cinemas that were either partially utilized or not used at all which created the opportunity to approach these cinemas with a different operational model to rent one of their screens. Second, was accessibility – it would have been easier

to have a screen at one of MIF's theatre complexes such as American Plaza, about 30 km west of downtown in 6<sup>th</sup> of October City but it was very important to the founders to be hosted in a centrally located movie theatre as they wanted to be accessible and visible to the general public, not part of an institution that many view as inaccessible such as the Opera grounds or the AUC Tahrir Campus (Y. El Shazli, personal communication, March 26, 2015). Zawya reached an agreement with Odeon Cinemas and started operating in March 2014. Originally they forecasted that they would attract mostly a niche cinephile clientele who already frequent downtown. But throughout the last year, they realized that their customers are more diverse than expected; it included university students, senior citizens (particularly in the matinee shows) and sometimes people intending to go to Odeon and decide to watch a film at Zawya when intrigued by the film poster (Y. El Shazli, personal communication, March 26, 2015). Although they are yet to conduct surveys to get more accurate information on the diversity of customers, from observation one can see that some screenings attract a wider audience than the typical art enthusiasts.

Despite just finishing its first year of operating, Zawya has become one of the most frequented spaces in downtown compared to other art and cultural entities, which is in part related to the familiarity of the cinema medium to a wider audience (compared to contemporary arts) and in other parts to their clever and diverse selection of films and short film screening durations with each film showing for only one week, some special screenings are even shown for just one night.

#### ***4.2.3. Restaurants and Bars***

Downtown's arts and intellectual culture extends outside the galleries and exhibitions to

the numerous nostalgic bars, cafes and restaurants in the area. Restaurants such as Estoril, Grillon and the Greek Club, cafes such as the famous Café Riche, and bars such as El-Horreya, were and continue to be the places where the arts enthusiasts meet for leisure in downtown for decades, and some even exhibited in these establishments (W. Wells, personal communication, February 25, 2015). And over the past ten years, new congregation centers such as the (often unlicensed) street cafes on the pedestrianized Borsa (stock market) street, and the nightlife scene buzzed with regular underground live music performances in bars such as After Eight. More recently Kafein Café and Eish & Malh (bread and salt) restaurant and nightclubs such as VENT have attracted young, high-mid income clientele who want to frequent downtown and enjoy its decrepit charm but are not as entrenched in the downtown arts scene per se or interested in the older establishments listed earlier.

#### ***4.2.4. Collaborations between Arts and Cultural Entities***

Most of the arts and cultural spaces in downtown have a niche within which they operate, which creates opportunities for cooperation between them if a project's scale and nature falls outside the expertise of one entity – with festivals being the prime example. Al-Nitaq festival was the first large-scale cooperation between different art spaces in downtown, and now D-CAF with its diverse programming in visual and performing arts benefiting from spaces such as Zawya for its film screenings, and Townhouse's Rawabet Theatre for some of its performances. On a smaller scale, entities from outside of downtown utilize the spaces and facilities of these entities for access to their faithful followers, such as the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) film screenings at Zawya. However, collaborations that are not properly managed often lead to the disbandment of

very promising initiatives, such as al-Nitaq, which ceased after 2 years due to internal issues between the managing art spaces.

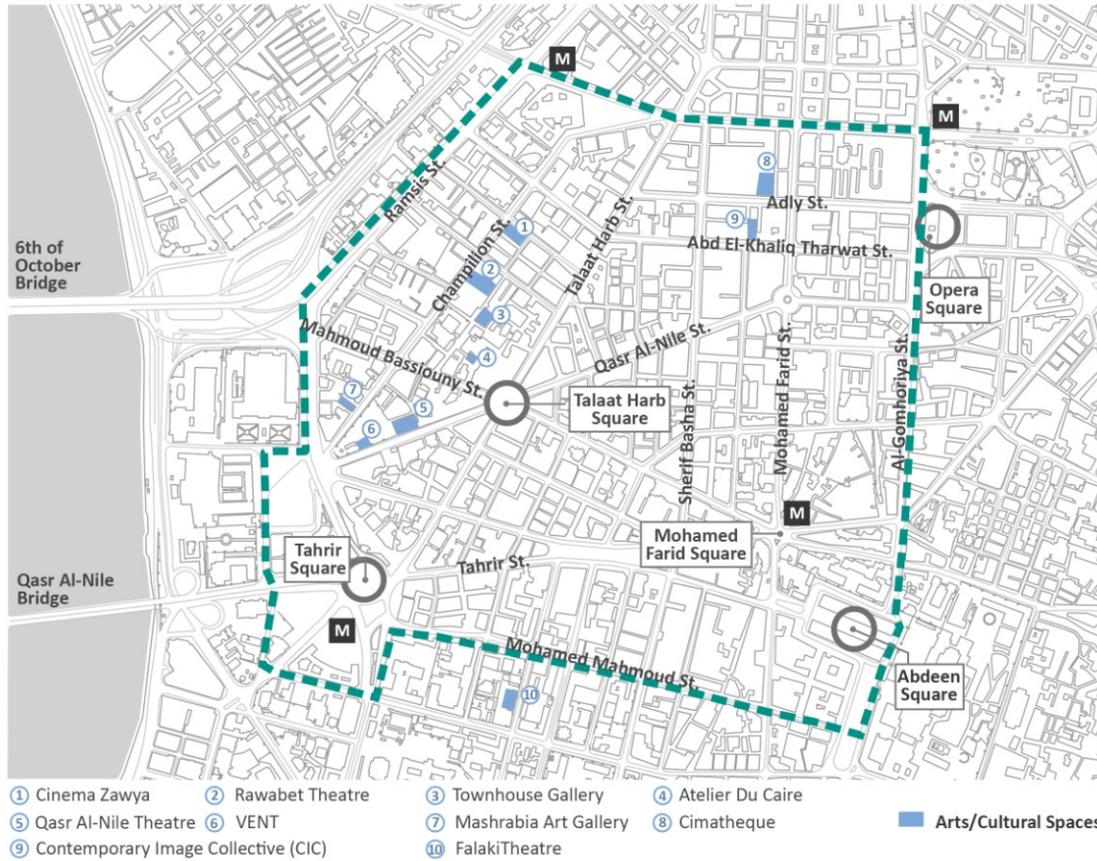


Figure 17: Main alternative arts/cultural spaces in downtown Cairo (base map (CAPMAS, 2006)).

#### 4.2.5. Interactions with Local Businesses

The arts and cultural entities in downtown are often surrounded with mechanic workshops, such as Townhouse’s area, commercial stores, such as the passage that Kafein is in, and more commonly street cafes that cater to middle-income youth and families. A common experience between these arts and cultural entities and their neighboring businesses is that the quality of the relationship between them is highly dependent on the ability of local businesses to capture an economic benefit from the presence of these cultural entities. Townhouse for instance was able to increase business

in the neighboring craftsmen businesses as they are hired to construct artistic installations and also many support staff in the gallery are residents of the area (W. Wells, personal communication, February 25, 2015). Zawya, Townhouse and Mashrabia gallery have street cafes adjacent to their entities and those who visit these art spaces often frequent them, to the extent that some have become regular customers of these cafes (S. Angarano, personal communication, March 23, 2015; Y. El Shazli, personal communication, March 26, 2015; Wells 2015). Therefore the neighboring businesses ensure keeping a good relationship with these art spaces, as they want to continue to reap the financial benefits from their clientele frequenting their businesses.

On the other hand, Kafein is in a pedestrian passage and most of its neighboring businesses are men's clothing stores that specialize in outdated men suits. At first the storeowners were optimistic that their revenues would also increase as a result of the increased pedestrian buzz created by the coffee shop. However, Kafein's customers are mostly under 30 years old who do not buy suits and when they do, it would not be the fashion outdated ones sold in these stores. This caused a high tension and negative sentiments towards Kafein as they would see the coffee shop flourishing and overflowing with customers and they would not have any for days at a time. This resulted in several fights related to making women patrons uncomfortable in the outdoor seating area, prompting Kafein to exterminate all communication and interaction with neighboring businesses (N. Dropkin, personal communication, March 23, 2015).

## **Chapter 5: Non-State Stakeholders: Urban Research and Entrepreneurship Hubs**

This chapter examines the two remaining types of non-state stakeholders to be examined in this research study; urban research centers and entrepreneurship hubs.

### **5.1. Urban Research**

In the months following the 2011 revolution architect Omar Nagati, and artist and curator Beth Stryker started the Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research (CLUSTER) as a space to study the changes and transformations in urban spaces. CLUSTER's urban research interests primarily focus on the contestation and negotiation involved in the informal occupation of urban space in the city, with a particular focus on downtown Cairo and informal areas. Over the past few years they have conducted several research studies and design interventions in that regard, of relevance here is the surveying of key pedestrian passages in downtown, and the street vendors' initiative. The purpose of the passageways research project was to examine the feasibility of developing a "pilot urban design and art project" in these in-between spaces to "promote a more diverse, inclusive, and accessible public space in downtown" (CLUSTER, 2015a). The project started as part of a university course design studio that Nagati was teaching in 2010 where the students set out to map some of the passages in downtown. The interesting results of the design studio inspired the continuation of the research project when CLUSTER was established in 2011. The project was funded by several donor agencies at different phases throughout the last four years, such as the Ford Foundation, the Danish Cultural Institute and DEDI, and Ismaelia did fund a segment of

the project in 2011 as the project's objective is in sync with the intervention strategies proposed by I2UD to Ismaelia discussed earlier.

Over the life of the project the research team not only conducted extensive mapping of over 80% of the approximately 120 passages, their usages and encroachments added by users, but also redesigned interventions that increase the efficiency of the usage of these spaces that put into account the current commercial uses and make them more inviting for users. CLUSTER was able to secure a fund in 2014 to develop a pilot project to redesign two passageways on Adly st., Kodak and Phillips passages. The first passage is wide and adjacent to Ismaelia's office headquarters and only has a few retailers along it, rendering it much quieter than other passages in downtown, while the latter is much narrower and is occupied with many businesses that sell electric supplies and other goods (CLUSTER, 2016a; 2016b). CLUSTER hopes these passages can be used in the future as cultural and art pop-up spaces that serve the community. A second derivative of the passageway research project is the development of the D-Tour walking tour commissioned by Ismaelia discussed earlier.





**Figure 18: Renovated Kodak (above) and Phillips (below) passages in downtown (photo credit: CLUSTER).**

CLUSTER's other downtown-related research project was the Street Vendors Initiative, which was initiated in late 2011 in partnership with a human rights organization, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), and the governorate. The initiative stemmed from the exponential increase in the presence of street vendors in the streets of downtown following the 2011 revolution and the subsequent tensions with residents, store owners, security, and even street vendors who have been in the area for decades. The purpose of this initiative was to create a space for dialogue and act as a mediator in the negotiation process to reach a compromise between the different stakeholders' the priorities and needs within the framework of the right to urban space and the right to the city. It is a very contentious issue and they were able to facilitate several meetings with officials and storeowners, and help the street vendors to mobilize and unionize with the partnership of EIPR (CLUSTER, 2013a). Using its technical design expertise, CLUSTER attempted to better understand how street vendors use the urban space through surveying and mapping several streets to propose design alternative solutions that can be utilized to accommodate for the needs of the different stakeholders. However, the forceful removal

of street vendors in 2014 put an abrupt end to the initiative, (CLUSTER, 2013b) as the government showed it was not interested in negotiating or reaching a middle ground of limiting street vendors to specific pedestrian areas that would not impede traffic.

The integration of art and culture into urban development and developing a platform to include them in this process is part of CLUSTER's mission statement (CLUSTER, 2013c). The booming number of art and cultural spaces and the increasing presence of real estate interests in downtown has ignited the idea of forming a collective entity that supports the sustainability, protects and advocates for the needs and interests of, and promote collaboration within the art community in downtown. This idea was brought forth by CLUSTER after the 2011 revolution and is supported in concept by Ismaelia and the Ford Foundation. This is not the first time that an attempt has been made to organize art spaces in downtown. In 2006 a downtown arts council was created by the same art entities that created al-Nitaq and included a handful of other art spaces, however similar to al-Nitaq it disbanded two years later due to internal problems which the founders have not made public (W. Wells, personal communication, February 25, 2015).

## **5.2. Entrepreneurship Hubs - GrEEK Campus**

The AUC's relocation from downtown in 2008 to the New Cairo campus left the majority of the university's facilities and buildings under-/unused, one of these building complexes, the Greek Campus, gained the attention of Ahmed El Alfi, founder of Sawari Ventures, a venture capital firm, and Flat6Labs, a startup accelerator program that supports entrepreneurs in the MENA region. El Alfi was interested in creating a creativity-inducing hub for entrepreneurs in the tech industry to thrive and create innovative solutions and the Greek Campus was the perfect location for this project. El

Alfi and the AUC signed a 10-year lease agreement in 2013 and currently the 250,000 square feet, five building complex is 60% occupied with start-ups and mid-size companies (A. El Alfi, personal communication, April 5, 2015).<sup>19</sup> El Alfi believes this initiative is serving a need in the startup and tech communities and envisions the GrEEK Campus to be a central space of inspiration and innovation for these communities in the heart of Cairo. It also envisions itself as contributing to increasing the average income in downtown by attracting tech jobs. Although the GrEEK Campus' focus is on entrepreneurship in the technology industry, it is rumored that a top-level executive in the company expressed their future interest in investing in downtown real estate in the future.<sup>20</sup>

The GrEEK Campus extends beyond catering to young entrepreneurs and technologically savvy individuals. The GrEEK Campus is starting to play a cultural role in downtown, hosting a diverse nature of activities, allowing the other entities to use some of its spaces for regular music, arts, marketplaces and other cultural activities open to the public.<sup>21</sup> In addition to the business side of the GrEEK Campus and how they attract young entrepreneurs, it is also bringing back some of the activity AUC students brought into downtown (M. Radwan, personal communication, February 22, 2015). According to El Alfi, on average 4-5 events take place on campus on a weekly basis, he believes that

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<sup>19</sup> Part of the lease agreement with the AUC was to retain the name of the campus, which resulted in the reconceptualization of the name, emphasizing “geek” part of the word, and is written now as the “GrEEK Campus”.

<sup>20</sup> An interviewee who wished to remain anonymous reported that a top-level executive at the GrEEK Campus expressed to them the company's future interest in entering the downtown real estate market.

<sup>21</sup> Events are open to the public, however as with most private spaces in Egypt, there is security presence at the door and identification cards are checked for entry.

combining technology, design and art enriches the environment and creativity levels of the startups and businesses in the complex (2015).

The GrEEK Campus hosted some of the D-CAF performances that took place in the campus' library and open space, which included music and dance performance, as well as performing arts. However, the most publicized D-CAF event that took place there was the Women On Walls (WoW) graffiti workshop. WoW is an initiative founded in 2013 by Mia Grondhal, author of *Revolution Graffiti –Street Art of the New Egypt* (2013). WoW utilizes street and graffiti artists to shed light on women empowerment issues. The workshop organizers along with the GrEEK Campus attracted significant criticism as it chose the complex's wall on the infamous Mohamed Mahmoud street which featured revolution-related graffiti work depicting the violent street battles between protestors and SCAF in 2011 and 2012, for the graffiti workshop. The graffiti along Mohamed Mahmoud is among the last remaining politically charged street art in Cairo that has not been painted over.<sup>22</sup> Technically, the wall is part of El Alfi's property and he has the right to do as he pleases with it, however the graffiti work on this street specifically of high significance to many as one of the last strands of public reminders of the 2011 revolution. This prompted backlashes on social media and the spraying over new graffiti during the five-day workshop, such as shown below with the spray of the following statement over the wall "this street is a necropolis only here no commercial graffiti is allowed". The sentiment behind opposing their art being painted over by someone who promotes graffiti in Egypt is understandable, although calling graffiti that sheds light on gender issues

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<sup>22</sup> For a closer look at the evolution of graffiti on Mohamed Mahmoud street see Abaza (2015, 2014a)

“commercial” is not particularly accurate. Being sponsored by the property owner does not make it commercial per se.



**Figure 19: Graffiti artists opposing WoW graffiti workshop on Mohamed Mahmoud. (Photo credit: Hajer Awatta, captured April 2015)**

Grondal is not new to controversy, her previous workshop in Cairo resulted in several participants withdrawing from the workshop and depicting her on one of the GrEEK’s Campus’ walls with a dollar sign in one eye and feces emoji in the other (Eickhof, 2015). El Alfi removed the insulting graffiti before the start of the workshop this year, he welcomes any graffiti on his walls as long as they are not: political, religious, include profanity or nudity (A. El Alfi, personal communication, April 5, 2015). Opposing political graffiti in a street filled and known for its politically charged graffiti is bound to create backlash from graffiti artists and probably even more “offensive” graffiti. Over the past four years the anti-government graffiti art on Mohamed Mahmoud has been repainted over by the government several times, only to be met with even more aggressive graffiti days after, although the current tightened security presence may hinder

the creation of elaborate graffiti art as has been the case in previous years (Abaza, 2015). This issue is not however particular to the Cairo's graffiti, the tension between establishments whose property is used as a canvas for the expression of graffiti and street artists is found in almost any city with active street artists.



**Figure 20: Graffiti insulting Grondhal founder of WoW by unknown Graffiti artists.  
(Photo credit: Mada Masr)**

## Chapter 6: Stakeholder Analysis

The stakeholder analysis will tackle the interactions between and perceptions of the stakeholder groups examined in the previous chapters. This is then used to visualize the power dynamics and dependencies between the stakeholder groups.

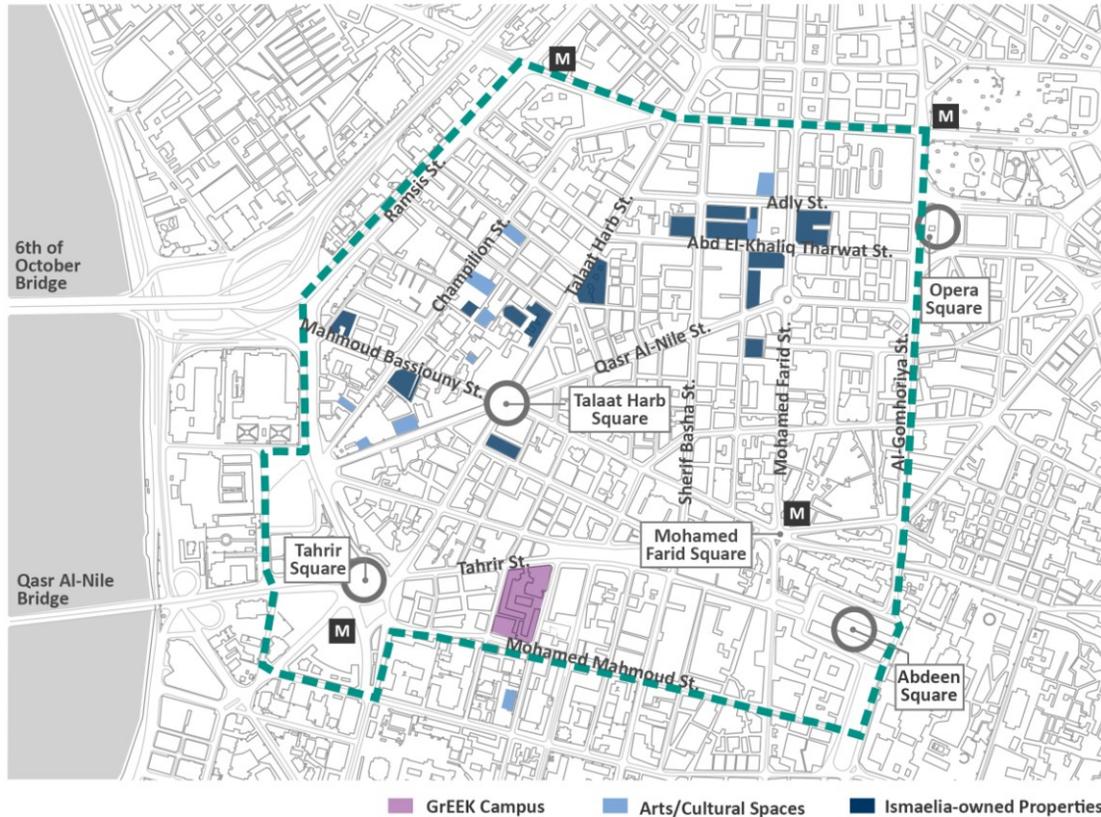
### 6.1. Interactions and Perceptions

The previous chapters presented the current and past projects each stakeholder had for downtown Cairo, in addition to any future plans. However we are yet to examine how the different stakeholders perceive each other's roles and impact on downtown and how they interact together.

Looking at the governorate's handful of development projects for downtown over the past fifteen years one can easily see the consistent theme – external beautification. The focus is always on improving the aesthetics of downtown through façade renovation, with minimal infrastructure upgrading – mostly in the form of sidewalk repaving. The government's current beautification efforts although in themselves are needed, they are not financially sustainable – highly dependent on donations from other public and private entities, and will not result in economic gains for those in downtown (A. Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015). They also lack a comprehensive vision for downtown, but are rather isolated projects (Al Alfi, 2015; S. Angarano, personal communication, March 23, 2015; S. Attia, personal communication, February 23, 2015; K. Ibrahim, personal communication, March 20, 2015; Helmi, 2015; W. Wells, personal communication, February 25, 2015) conducted without the support of impact studies (S. Attia, personal communication, February 23, 2015). There is no discussion on the

improvement of services, strategies to utilize vacant units (K. Ibrahim, personal communication, March 20, 2015), or the control and monitoring of unregistered commercial activities (S. Angarano, personal communication, March 23, 2015).

The government's as well as Ismaelia's interest in developing downtown stems from a nostalgic vision, regaining some of the glamour of the first half of the last century before it was "de-gentrified" with the transformation of the social composition from upper to mid- and low-mid income strata (Helmi, 2015; K. Ibrahim, personal communication, March 20, 2015). Even though both have the same ultimate goal of sanitizing downtown from informal and popular practices, they still are yet to join forces as the state wants to retain control over downtown, as El Shahed puts it "the government [seems to be] competing with Ismaelia in the development of downtown, instead of supporting and encouraging private investment [similar to other countries]" (M. El Shahed, personal communication, March 5, 2015).



**Figure 21: Ismaelia-owned properties, arts/cultural spaces, and the GrEEK Campus (base map (CAPMAS, 2006))**

After the 2011 revolution the state security apparatuses have been trying to reclaim their presence in the public sphere and emphasize the return of the state and order, particularly in the highly politicized downtown. The physical barriers, limited accessibility and removal of street vendors discussed earlier along with legislation that stifles public mobilization and congregation (anti-protest law) were strategies to regain this control by dictating what can and cannot be done in these spaces and what types of activity are welcome. This resulted in a retreat of political expression in the country as a whole, and most prominently in downtown, which used to hold a weekly protest on average during 2012-2013. This has impacted some stakeholders more than others; the private sector (with the exception of CLUSTER which adopts an inclusive participatory development

approach) welcomed the increased security presence and removal of street vendors as they negatively impacted their operations. Artists on the other end, felt intimidated from working in downtown, similar to the intense pressure they experienced from state security in 2009-2010 (W. Wells, personal communication, February 25, 2015) - interestingly, Zawya Cinema welcomed the increased stability in downtown as the increased sense of security positively impacted turn out to their screenings (Y. El Shazli, personal communication, March 26, 2015). On the other hand, if the new capital city is implemented as planned and the majority of public institutions and ministries are relocated to the new city, this would probably result in a significant decrease in the state's interest in the increased securitization and control of downtown, opening the opportunity for private investments to flourish in downtown Cairo (A. El Alfi, personal communication, April 5, 2015). However, the impact of the new capital city on downtown depends on how the general public and the state perceive downtown after the planned relocation of government institutions from the city center; whether it retains its political symbolism or it evolves to a touristic and commercial quarter.

Looking at MREA's impact on downtown development as the single biggest property owner in the area is potentially very significant, as any large-scale development plan would have to include them as a key partner. However, as mentioned earlier over half of MREA's downtown units are occupied under the old rent agreement, which gives the company little incentive to proactively upgrade. However as a publicly-owned enterprise that falls under the ministry of investment, their decision-making process is not completely autonomous, key decision making is highly influenced, if not dictated by the cabinet's philosophy and intentions (A. Ismail, personal communication, March 31,

2015). Thus, if the cabinet wishes to embark on a development project in downtown, MREA is a guaranteed partner.

Private investors in downtown have the financial capital advantage over the other non-government stakeholders, however they are also constrained by the governmental limitations and bureaucracy. For instance, the average timeframe for Ismaelia to obtain a permit to renovate one of its properties is 18 months on average as it goes through the numerous processes (A. Helmi, personal communication, March 10, 2015). However, if the latest economic conference is any indicator, the relationship between the government and the private investors may change in the near future to a more aligned partnership. On the other hand, the relationship between private investors and the arts community is continuing to grow as they offer one of the few local financing resources for the independent arts and cultural scene, increasing its control over the ‘symbolic economy’. Ismaelia has made it no secret that part of its strategic plan is to foster and support arts, cultural and entertainment venues in downtown to “humanize the space of real estate development” as Zukin (1995, p. 22) calls it. Ismaelia is aware of the restrictions it faces on multiple fronts and is as such not attempting to change all of downtown. They are focusing on specific areas, working on creating “pockets of urban upper-middle class” where entrepreneurs can set up nice restaurants and businesses complimentary to nearby art spaces (W. Wells, personal communication, February 25, 2015).

Whether this will have significant gentrifying effects on downtown Cairo is unclear, it will highly depend on state interference. The current safeguard against private investors narrowing the rent gap and gentrifying downtown is the old rent law, which although is not fair to the property owner it protects tenants against eviction or rental hikes. The

government attempted to pass legislation numerous times to gradually unlock these controlled agreements, at least for units used for non-housing however the potential significant backlash from tenants in the already tense political environment has stalled these plans. There have been unconfirmed narratives that Ismaelia has intimidated several old rent tenants to evict them from their properties, one by preventing water access to units for prolonged periods of time and the other by hiring security companies with security dogs to intimidate the tenants.<sup>23</sup> Ismaelia has repeatedly denied such claims of illegal intimidation tactics over the years, and even it is assumed that they may have done so on a few occasions, it is not a solution that can be done on a large scale to gain them control over the remaining 40% of their units.

It is undeniable that the independent arts and cultural scene has grown significantly over the past 20 years, attracting more youth and young adults than before. However with the testament of some of the main arts entities in downtown (W. Wells, personal communication, February 25, 2015; S. Angarano, personal communication, March 23, 2015; Y. El Shazli, personal communication, March 26, 2015), their impact has been limited to specific pockets surrounding the art venues, particularly those located on the ground level. Many art spaces such as CIC, Mashrabia, Cimatheque, and others are located in apartments in upper floors – called “the apartment culture” by Cairoobserver (2012) – which significantly impacts their interaction with their surroundings and visibility to passersby. These spaces are often only known to those intentionally seeking them out, not the average person visiting downtown (W. Wells, personal communication,

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<sup>23</sup> This was narrated by two interviewees, both who wished to remain anonymous. One was indirectly evicted due to lack of water access, and the other has personal relations with the security company allegedly hired.

February 25, 2015). Some argue that the gentrification and dislocation theories are not applicable in downtown Cairo because of the high vacancy rate; so far the emerging dining establishments, arts and cultural spaces have largely taken over unutilized spaces (M. El Shahed, personal communication, March 5, 2015). The research results imply that gentrification and dislocation of lower-income residents and small businesses are not expected as a result of the current independent arts and entertainment scene in downtown on the short-term.

## **6.2. Power Dynamics and Influence**

In order to visualize the hierarchy and relationships between the different stakeholders involved, several stakeholder analysis mapping exercises were conducted, the results of which are shown in this section. The tools used were adopted from two stakeholder analysis toolkits developed by an international development agency in Egypt, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) (GTZ, 2007). The stakeholder analysis has been used in the Participatory Development Program (PDP) in Urban Areas initiated by the GIZ in Egypt. First, the information and data gathered during this research were used to qualitatively evaluate the position and core role of each stakeholder. This was used to create a graphic representation of the accumulation of different types of power by the different stakeholders.

The qualitative evaluation of the legitimacy, resources and relationship-building capability of the studied stakeholders is tabulated in Table 2 and illustrated in Figure 20. It is evident that the BTHC is the only stakeholder that has all three types of power – the political, financial, and expert knowledge – through its diverse consortium of members it is able to secure the financial resources from its partner financial institutions and from

public funds, it of course has the legitimacy of the state and political power backed by the Governor and the Cabinet of ministers, and it has strong expert backing through the governorate's technical advisors from the Ministry of Housing, GOPP, as well as the NOUH's technical expertise. As individual stakeholders, the latter two government agencies along with the governorate have the political legitimacy of the state as well as technical expertise, both which allow them to easily create partnerships and networks with other stakeholders at their discretion.

MREA and the financial institutions on the other hand, have the legitimacy seal of the state and are able to secure financial resources when needed, however they are not particularly experts in urban development and upgrading and are not keen on networking with other stakeholders working on the overall revitalization of downtown.

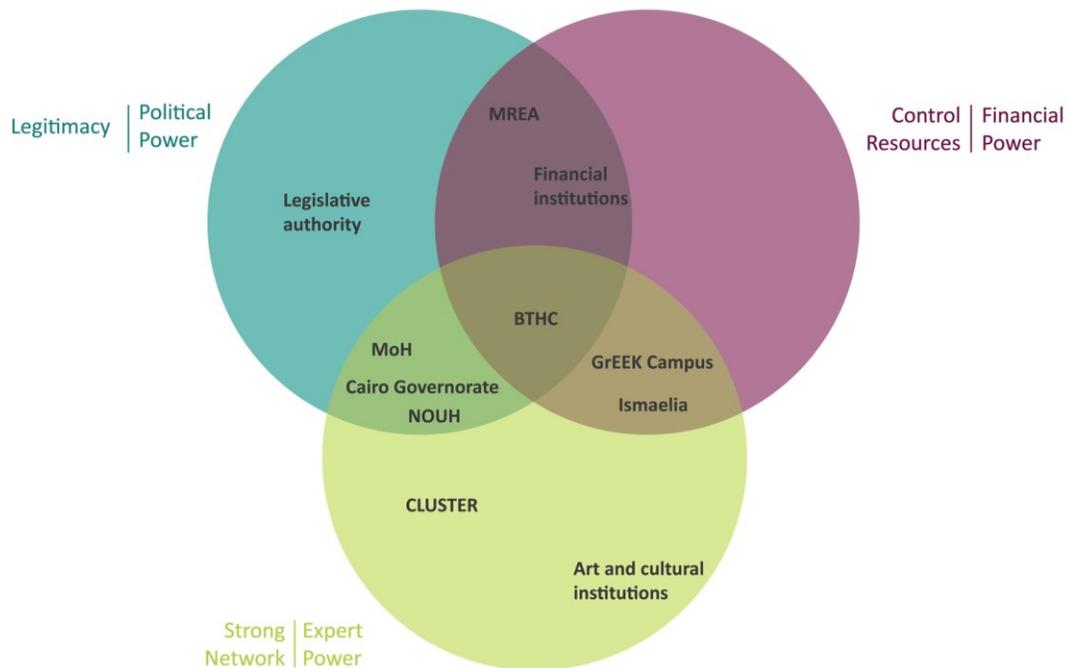
Examining the private sector, by nature they are financially strong, and their high interest in the development of downtown makes them reach out to experts in the field, such as CLUSTER and I2UD for instance, to provide urban solutions using their technical expertise.

Finally, the arts and cultural spaces' and urban researchers' limited power mostly stems from their expertise in their field, whether it is urban design or creating events and exhibitions that attract people. Their presence helps create of an image of a cosmopolitan upper-class global downtown attractive to some higher-income individuals.

Stakeholder		Position & Core Function		
		Roles & Legitimacy	Resources & Responsibility	Relationships
Government	Cairo Governorate	s	m	s
	NOUH	s	w	s
	MREA	s	m	w
	BTHC	s	m	s
	GOPP	s	s	s
	Legislative authority	s	n/a	n/a
	Financial institutions	s	s	w
Private Sector	Ismaelia	m	s	m
	GrEEK Campus	m	s	s
	CLUSTER	w	w	s
Arts/Culture	Arts/Culture	w	w	m

s – strong, m – medium, w – weak. n/a – not applicable

**Table 2: Evaluation of the legitimacy, resources and responsibility, and relationship building capabilities of the key stakeholders**



**Figure 22: Graphic representation of the types of power embodied in key stakeholders in relation to the urban development of downtown Cairo**

Table 3 below is a more detailed evaluation of the authority of the different stakeholders through seven types of authority. The results (color-coded by score) are generally consistent with the above; here the BTHC scored a close second after the governorate due to the governorate's higher power in allocating rewards, recognition and sanctions. The other government stakeholders scored high on the different power indices as well, with the lowest being NOUH due to its limited power in the allocation of resources and not being essential gatekeepers of information and knowledge in relation to downtown development, and the banking institutions whose power primarily stems from their financial resources.

Stakeholder / Authority		OS	RS	TR	SP	CI	RS	CM	Total
Government	Governorate	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	20
	Board of trustees	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	19
	Legislative authority	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	19
	NOUH	3	1	1	2	1	3	3	14
	Ministry of Housing*	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	20
	Banking institutions	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	10
	MREA	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	8
Private Sector	Ismaelia	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	10
	GrEEK Campus	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	9
	CLUSTER	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
Arts/Culture	Arts/Culture	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7

3 – strong, 2 – medium, 1 – weak

\* This particularly looks at the impact of the Ministry of Housing on downtown through the New Capital City and GOPP's Cairo 2050 vision

OS – setting objectives, norms

RS – allocating or denying resources

TR – defining roles, tasks and responsibilities

SP – structuring the participation in decision-making processes

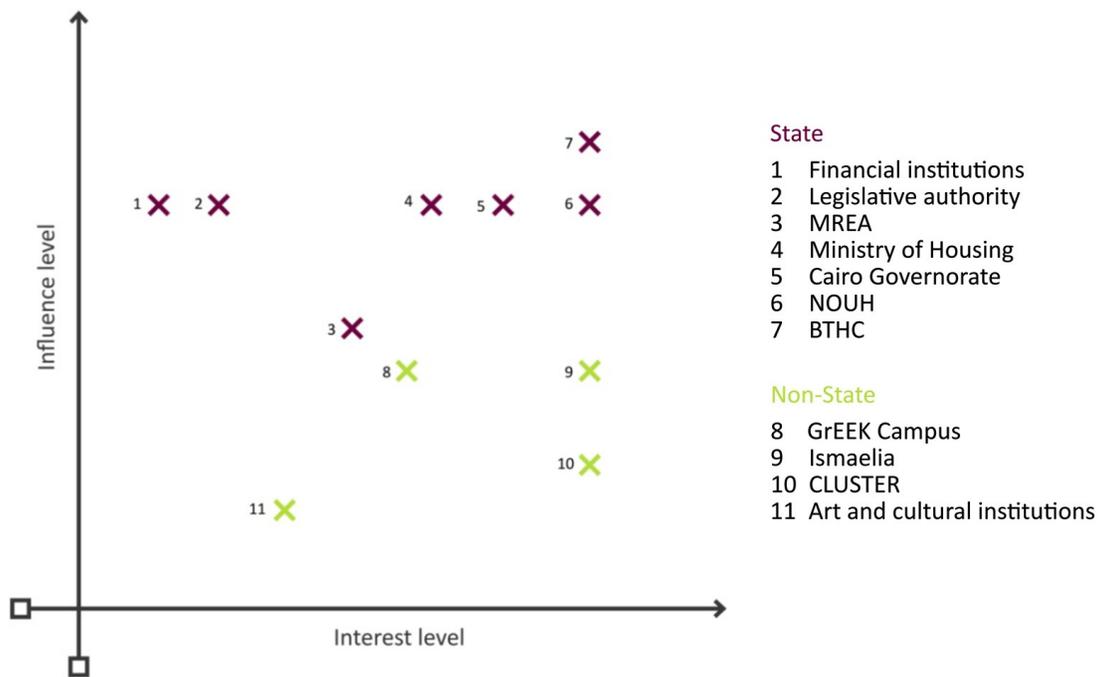
CI – controlling access to information and knowledge

RS – allocating rewards, recognition and sanctions

CM – channeling messages to superiors and external

**Table 3: Evaluation of different types of authority for each key stakeholder**

This understanding of the different types of power and authority held by each stakeholder was then used to map the influence of the stakeholders compared to their interest in the urban development of downtown Cairo in Figure 23. The purpose of this graph is to identify the stakeholders who may have strong influence on any adopted development project and who may not have significant interest. These stakeholders would be imperative to persuade and win if any successful, inclusive, sustainable development is to take place. The graph below shows these two stakeholders to be the financial institutions and the legislative authority (which usually is the Parliament, but currently the legislative power has been assigned to the President till the Parliament is reelected). It is also important to be aware of those with high influence and interest in the development process and whether their interests align with the public good.



**Figure 23: Mapping of the influence of key stakeholders and their interest in urban development of downtown**

All of the above results are synthesized into Figure 22, which illustrates the impact of each stakeholder on the development of downtown as well as the inter-relationship between them. The size of the stakeholders shown in the figure correlate with their relevant level of impact and importance a stakeholder, whether they are key, primary, or secondary stakeholders in the urban transformation process in downtown. The arrows between the stakeholders indicate the dominant relationship between the stakeholders and urban transformation in downtown. The double line indicator highlights a strong relationship between stakeholders. Only two such relations were uncovered during this research, between the governorate and NOUH in the government realm, and between Ismaelia and GrEEK Campus in the private sector.

Figure 24 shows that even though the governorate and the BTHC are the two most influential stakeholders, they are dependent and influenced themselves by other stakeholders, such as the legislative authority and financial funding. On the other spectrum, arts, cultural and entertainment spaces which were deemed very limited influence or power do contribute and impact the private sector through the cultural economy they create in downtown, regardless of how limited it may be at the moment, as well as being one of the main attractions to many upper-middle income youth, who probably would not frequent downtown otherwise.



**Figure 24: Stakeholder mapping of the relationships between key actors related to urban development of downtown Cairo**

### **6.3. Key Findings**

The main outcomes of the stakeholder analysis illustrated in the stakeholder map above are divided in this section into findings about the individual influence positions of stakeholders and alliances between stakeholders.

#### **6.3.1. Individual Stakeholder Positions**

Examining the power dynamics between the different stakeholders it became evident, as expected, that the state is the most powerful overall actor as is the case in most urban development in globalizing cities, particularly the Board of Trustees of Historic Cairo, as it is able to capture the financial, political and technical resources needed through its consortium of executive, technical and financial public actors delegated to design and oversee the revitalization of downtown. While all the other stakeholders are able to exert a maximum of two types of the abovementioned power and influence. Once the power and influence scale of actors is understood, the level of interest in the development of downtown can be mapped. This showed that some of the most influential actors (financial institutions and legislative authorities) do not have a particularly vested interest in the development of downtown and often get involved based on direct orders from high public executive levels. This is an opportunity for stakeholders who have great interests in the socially-inclusive development of downtown to approach these stakeholders and build common ground and show mutual benefit from supporting such initiatives.

In contrast, the arts and cultural entities exhibited the lowest level of influence on urban change in downtown at the moment. Their impact is limited to immediate zones of

interface with their surrounding. The interaction with neighboring businesses and users of downtown is related to the perceived accessibility of the entity.

### **6.3.2. Stakeholder Alliances and Dependencies**

#### *6.3.2.1. Alliances between State Stakeholders*

The analysis revealed a strong relationship between the Cairo Governorate and NOUH. not only are they both key members of the BTHC, they also both draw legitimacy from their alliance. NOUH depends on the governorate as its executive arm in handling illegal building activity on heritage buildings, and at the same time, the governorate is seen as the protector of said heritage and public interest through its cooperation with NOUH.

#### *6.3.2.2. Alliances between Non-State Stakeholders*

The stakeholder analysis revealed interesting collaborations and networks between seemingly unrelated private investors, Ismaelia and GrEEK Campus, both which are interested in the development of downtown, and are interested in forming a lobby group/board of trustees to advocate for the interests of the private sector and property owners in downtown. If this concept gains wind, it will have very tangible implications on public investments in downtown, and possibly even legislations such as the rent law.

On another front, private investors often collaborate with art and cultural entities to create a more vibrant and investment-attractive area through subsidies, grants and partnerships. A significant number of arts and cultural entities and individual artists have a strong dependency on Ismaelia for financial support and spaces for exhibitions. The GrEEK Campus is also starting to be one of the main spaces for holding large events in downtown. Some in the arts and cultural scene are aware of the potential dangers of this

dependency, while others see it as a positive force in downtown. The relationship between the different stakeholders can be further analyzed using Clarence Cen's urban regime theory, which is used by urban analysts to understand the influence of different stakeholders on the decision-making and policy-formulating processes in urban governance. Cen's theory is relevant to this study as it examines the contestation over spatial control and access, an imperative aspect of the urban development of downtown.

#### *6.3.2.3. Alliances between State and Non-State Stakeholders*

The alignment of interests between the state and private sector is common in many urban development projects. The government secures the financial resources for the development needed to create an "attractive urban imagery" to attract foreign and domestic investments in the global competition between cities, while the private sector benefits from the legitimacy and political power provided by the state umbrella. However, as of yet, the government has been wary in including the private sector in their development efforts and prefers a monopoly and complete control of the process and the area. This is not so much due to it safeguarding the public interest and vulnerable groups from capitalist interests, as some of the government's development efforts have negatively impacted the economic activity of vulnerable groups such as street vendors and unlicensed coffee shops. It can rather be attributed to not wanting to have a foreign-funded company steering the development of the city center with all that the area holds of political significance.

The interests of private investors, such as Ismaelia's interests coincide with the government's on certain issues, both are interested in removing informality and popular uses in downtown and capitalize on revitalizing the nostalgic image of downtown during

its cosmopolitan, pre 1952 glory. The government is interested in such action to polish the image of Egypt, and downtown particularly, on the international arena from one associated with urban wars and political unrest, to one known for its safe, walkable areas filled with tourist-tailored amenities. Similarly, Ismaelia has been attempting to capitalize on this nostalgic image for years to attract higher-income professionals to work, live and entertain in downtown by creating mini-oasis pockets of high-income consumption in downtown. Even though freedom of political expression is not traditionally the concern of a real estate private investor like Ismaelia, the political instability and perceived sense of insecurity it created in downtown over the past four years, made Ismaelia and the state allies in this regard as the end result benefits both.

## Conclusion

Cairo as a whole and downtown in particular is a very dynamic place, undergoing many subtle and flagrant socioeconomic, urban, political and cultural transformations. The city center in most cities is continuously monitored and studied by researchers, however in Cairo this academic and research attention has been allocated to informal areas that house over two-thirds of the city's population, Islamic Cairo with its countless monuments, and private and public investments in desert cities. This left a gap in the field of urban studies and development that focus on the existing "formally planned" city and the city center in particular.

Interest in developing downtown Cairo has increased over the past two decades and particularly over the past ten years, garnering the interest of government urban planning and heritage conservation agencies, in addition to private real estate investors who saw great potential in the renovation and reuse of downtown's many underused units, and the emergence of a young alternative arts and cultural culture that set a base in downtown to express and share their (non-state affiliated) art. This was – and still is – intertwined with the political significance of downtown Cairo as a space for popular congregation and voicing of dissent, which eventually led to the overthrow of Egypt's longest serving president. This mixture of state intervention, capitalist investment and infusion of arts and culture can result in different visions for the future of downtown and its users, and in some cases can cause conflict between the local actors and ultimately negative socioeconomic and political impacts.

In light of the above, this study has explored the urban transformation in downtown Cairo through examining the efforts of influential state and non-state actors. It endeavored to contribute to understanding the relationships between these stakeholders and the impacts they have on downtown. The question ‘whose downtown is it’ that the thesis raises becomes pivotal not only for predicting future trends of each stakeholder, but also in any constructive efforts to create synergies and win-win arrangements between them.

Three main policy implications can be drawn from the results of this research. **First, the state needs to develop a clear comprehensive vision for the development of downtown.** Looking at the government agencies involved in designing or implementing urban upgrading projects and initiatives in downtown, a consistent urban development ideology arises, beautification. This is consistent with the government’s general urban upgrading ideology throughout the city – that a bucket of paint is what the city needs. Although in itself façade renovation is a positive initiative, it becomes negative when it is the main focus of a development plan and little to no attention is paid to infrastructural issues, land use inefficiencies and a clear vision for the overall functionality of downtown. The government’s other main focus in current plans is the removal of all and any informal encroachments on public space, which manifested most visibly in the complete removal of all street vendors from downtown area, and the continuous aggressive raids on unlicensed coffee shops. Similarly, upholding the implementation of the law is positive, however the consideration of the socioeconomic implications to said vision is critical at the same time, particularly when hundreds of youth depended on these informal jobs to make a living in the absence of alternative occupations in the formal job market. This needs to be examined in light of the increased security presence in

downtown through physical obstructions, security cameras and personnel, in addition to extensive media campaigns that praised the return of “stability” to the streets of downtown and the state’s efforts to re-establish the “golden age” of downtown.

**Secondly, the successful implementation of a comprehensive urban development vision requires the buy-in of *all* stakeholder groups.** As was illustrated in this study, the government plans did not include non-state stakeholders into the upgrading process except to raise funds for implementation – some may argue indirectly forcing their contributions. However, no real involvement of different groups took place. The analysis also revealed that even state stakeholders that hold significant influence such as financial institutions and legislative authorities were involved based on direct orders from high public executive levels, not due to any vested interest in upgrading downtown.

Lastly, all of the above bring up an important question, **how is the state planning on regulating urban transformation in downtown Cairo?** In other cities high private investments in deteriorated city centers have resulted in negative socioeconomic impacts for existing residents and small businesses as the demand for real estate increases and original tenants get pushed out. This gentrification often has impacts that exceed the relocation of residence, but can impact income-generation when low-income residents have to relocate to affordable residences over 30 kms away from their work with public transportation systems that are often unreliable and expensive. The research showed that the ingredients for gentrification are present but are not enacted due to rent control legislation; bureaucracy and a large number publicly-owned buildings in the area slowing down the widespread of a company such as Ismaelia to expand its ownership in downtown; in addition to the current high vacancy rate in downtown. The high vacancy

rate of units in the area, due to the deteriorated nature of downtown, means that much of the current and potential interest in downtown can be accommodated in vacant units. However, these inhibitors can change if the political will is materialized to reform the rent control legislation for instance. In this case, the state needs to devise a vision or working plan to prevent and mitigate negative socioeconomic impacts to urban change in downtown. **The divergence of the interests of different stakeholder groups can lead to contradictory plans and actions in the absence of a unified, comprehensive state-led vision, unless deliberate effort is exerted to capitalize on mutual benefits under the umbrella of protecting the public interest.**

I believe this study adds to the literature documenting urban space in downtown and the understanding of its current and future state in light of the interests and power of different stakeholders. It can be used as a basis for further research involving more stakeholders such as commercial retail spaces, small businesses, residents and users of downtown.

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## Appendix A: List of Interviewees

No.	Name	Title	Organization	Stakeholder group	Type of communication	Interview date
1	Riham Arram	Head of the General Administration of Heritage	Cairo Governorate	State	Personal interview	March 25, 2015
2	Akram Ismail	General Manager of the General Administration of Historic Properties	Misr Real Estate Assets (MREA)	State	Personal interview	March 31, 2015
3	Ahmed Helmi	Managing Director	Al-Ismaelia for Real Estate Investment	Non-State Private investors	Personal interview	March 10, 2015
4	Moushira Adel	Corporate Marketing Manager	Al-Ismaelia for Real Estate Investment	Non-State Private investors	Email correspondence	March 19, 2015
5	Ahmed El Alfi	Founder	Tahrir Alley Technology Park (GrEEK Campus)	Non- State Entrepreneurs	Personal interview	April 5, 2015
6	William Wells	Founder	Townhouse Gallery	Non-State Arts and culture	Personal interview	February 25, 2015
7	Stefania Angarano	Founder	Mashrabia Gallery	Non-State Arts and culture	Personal interview	March 23, 2015
8	Ahmed El Attar	Organizer	Downtown Contemporary Art Festival (D-CAF)	Non-State Arts and culture	Personal interview	April 7, 2015

No.	Name	Title	Organization	Stakeholder group	Type of communication	Interview date
9	Youssef El Shazli	Director	Zawya Cinema	Non-State Arts and culture	Personal interview	March 26, 2015
10	Mohamed Radwan	Co-Founder	IceCairo (technology and entrepreneurship hub in downtown)	Non-State Entrepreneurship	Personal interview	February 22, 2015
11	Nadia Dropkin	Co-Owner	Kaffein Eish & Malh	Non-State Entertainment	Personal interview	March 23, 2015
12	Sahar Attia	Co-Founder, Architect and Urban Planner	Associated Consultants Egypt (ACE)	Non-State Urban Expert	Personal interview	February 23, 2015
13	Kareem Ibrahim	Co-Founder, Architect	TADAMUN Cairo Urban Solidarity Initiative	Non-State Urban Expert	Personal interview	March 20, 2015
14	Mohamed El Shahed	Founder, Architect	Cairoobserver	Non-State Urban Expert	Personal interview	March 5, 2015

## Appendix B: Interview Question Guide

1. On a personal level, how has your downtown (DT) experience evolved over the years?
2. Could you describe for me the atmosphere in downtown at the time – social, urban, security presence, commercial life, etc.?
3. What changes do you see in DT since 2011?
4. Do you consider these changes a direct result of the revolution only or also a continuation of an ongoing evolution of space that was already taking place?
5. What are the main forces you see contributing to the changes in downtown?
6. What changes do you see in DT since June 30, 2013?
7. What do you see as downtown's main problems and assets now?
8. What are your thoughts on the relocation of street vendors from downtown streets?
9. What do you know about current government plans for DT? What are your impressions of these plans (beneficial yes/no and to whom)? Is it planning beyond renovating facades?
10. Are the current government efforts based on the GOPP winning competition entry for downtown proposal?
11. What do you think of the new administrative capital proposal? Do you foresee the overall impact on downtown to be positive or negative? And if relocated, what would you think is the best use of space?
12. How would you evaluate the impact of NOUH on downtown over the years?

13. What are your impressions of the real estate development plans (beneficial yes/no and to whom)? Do you think they will actually be able to have a significant impact on DT? What do they need to succeed/ what's missing?
14. In your opinion, do you think that attracting higher-income strata/development to DT is possible without drastically altering the current socioeconomic fabric?
15. Do you see MREA playing a role in the near future or do you think it will be silent bystander?
16. Do you think the emergence of cultural, art and entertainment spaces has had an impact on downtown fabric, or do they operate in exclusion of their surrounding, with minimal contact or effect on their surrounding?
17. Do you think reusing GrEEK Campus as tech hub will impact DT beyond AUC gates?
18. What do you know about the BTHC? Are they active at all now? Could they be a key player/liaison?
19. Have you heard of a downtown business council and/or arts council?
20. How do you envision DT? Commercial, touristic/cafes, residential, government center?
21. In your opinion, what would be the optimum development route for DT?
22. From your experience and visits to other cities in the global south, what lessons can be learned and applied in our context?

## Appendix C: Interviewee Consent Form

### استمارة موافقة مسبقة للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية

عنوان البحث : تطوير عمراني - إقتصادي - إجتماعي شامل لوسط البلد

الباحث الرئيسي: هاجر محمود عواته. طالبة ماجستير بالجامعة الامريكية بالقاهرة  
البريد الإلكتروني: [edu.aucegypt@hawatta](mailto:edu.aucegypt@hawatta)

انت مدعو للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية عن التطوير العمراني لوسط البلد (القاهرة).

**هدف الدراسة** هو محاولة ايجاد حلول لتطوير وسط البلد بطريقة شاملة تراعي الابعاد العمرانية و الاقتصادية و الاجتماعية.

نتائج البحث ستنشر في مكتبة الجامعة قسم رسائل الماجستير والنتائج قد تنشر ايضا في دوريه متخصصه أو مؤتمر علمي أو ربما كليهما.

المدة المتوقعة للمشاركة في هذا البحث هي الفترة المطلوبة لاجراء المقابلة الشخصية فقط.

اجراءات الدراسة تشتمل على مقابلة شخصية للاجابة علي اسئلة الباحث.

المخاطر المتوقعة من المشاركة في هذه الدراسة: لا يوجد مخاطر من اي نوع.

الاستفادة المتوقعة من المشاركة في البحث: لا توجد استفادة مادية او عينية او غيرها للمشاركة في البحث، نتائج البحث ستكون مفيدة للباحثين المهتمين بالتخطيط العمراني و المشاركة المجتمعية و الادارات الحكومية المختصة بالتخطيط العمراني.

السرية واحترام الخصوصية: المعلومات التي ستدلى بها في هذا البحث سوف تكون خاصة بالبحث و يمكن للمشارك المحافظة علي سرية هويته ان اراد ذلك.

اوافق ان يذكر إسمي في بحث رسالة الماجستير  
 لا اوافق ان يذكر إسمي في بحث رسالة الماجستير

أي أسئلة متعلقة بهذه الدراسة أو حقوق المشاركين فيها أو عند حدوث أي اصابات ناتجة عن هذه المشاركة يجب ان توجه الى هاجر محمود عواته.

ان المشاركة في هذه الدراسة ما هي الا عمل تطوعي، حيث أن الامتناع عن المشاركة لا يتضمن أي عقوبات أو فقدان أي مزايا تحق لك. ويمكنك أيضا التوقف عن المشاركة في أي وقت من دون عقوبة أو فقدان لهذه المزايا.

الامضاء: .....

اسم المشارك : .....

التاريخ : ...../...../.....

## Appendix D: List of Ismaelia-Owned Buildings

The following is the list of Ismaelia-owned buildings in downtown mapped in Figure 13.

The list was acquired from Ismaelia. In total, the company owns 16 buildings, four of which have multiple main entrances on different streets, which makes them count as more than one building according to Ismaelia, making for a total of 22 buildings.

Building Name	Building Address	Number of Building Entrances
Shourbagy	16 Adly St.	3
Kodak	20 Adly St.	2
Damaan	24 Adly St.	1
Café Riche	29 Hoda Shaarawy St.	1
Viennoise	7 Champollion St.	3
K.F.C.	22 Abdel Khaliq Tharwat St.	1
Gharib	36 Abd El Khaliq Tharwat St.	1
CIB	33 Sherif Basha St.	1
Goodluck	10 Mahmoud Bassiouny St.	1
Cinema Radio	24 Tal`at Harb St.	2
Tamara	17 Gawad Hosny St.	1
Gawad Hosny Land	25 Gawad Hosny St.	1
Thomas shop	27 Gawad Hosny St.	1
New Land	5 El-Nabarawy St.	1
Townhouse Gallery	6 El-Nabarawy St.	1
French Consulate	5 Fadl St.	1