WATER COLORS

The sea was eating the bun of the sun
while Alexandria was playing the accordion
on Stanley Bridge,
gathering strange lads around her!

I couldn't recognize her lower half;
It became too wide for my arm to put around her waist

Nay!
We can no longer dance the Flower Waltz,
nor eat grilled corns on the Isthmus of El-Shatby,
throwing the pebble of the hopscotch to the other shore

It won't be good to get fatter than that
and if she plays with me,
her weight will pull her down
to sink in the first box!

Fish eat all bait
and never catch the hook.
I'll go home with my basket full of salted water
wherein colors do not melt!

/Abdelrehim Youssef
IN OCTOBER 2011, Färgefabriken in conjunction with its Egyptian partners, Gudran Association for Art and Development, Alexandria University and the Swedish Institute Alexandria conducted extensive programs on urban topics in the city of Alexandria. The participants were municipal administrators, architects, artists, urban planners, and students among others. They came from the cities of Alexandria, Cairo, Amman, Beirut, Istanbul, Damascus and Stockholm. The aim of the initiative was to identify ways to strengthen positive cultural values and address some of the many challenges facing Alexandria. Moreover, the intent was to create an open and free platform for an exchange of experiences between the different stakeholders and the participating cities in order to enhance political participation and transboundary networks. The program was part of a larger project called New Urban Topologies, or NUT. This project will grow organically with people, projects, cities and ideas. The goal is new visions and strategies for the future of our societies.

FÄRGFABRIKEN is a Swedish center for contemporary art and architecture with an international approach. For more than a decade, Färgefabriken has been active in the fields of art, urban planning, sociology, and architecture.

TOPOLOGY
The word topology derives from Greek, a compound of “place” and “study”. Used in mathematics and cartography, it describes the spatial properties of objects and the relation of different points in a terrain; distances between these objects and sites play a lesser role.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FÄRGFABRIKEN WOULD LIKE to thank all of the people and institutions that helped realize this book and the implementation of the New Urban Topologies project.

A special thanks to the Swedish Institute Alexandria and the Swedish Institute in Stockholm for their collaboration and financial support that made the New Urban Topologies project, including this book, possible.

Many thanks to Hebattallah Abouelfadl and Alexandria University, Gudran Association for Art and Development, as well as the Urban Planning Department in Alexandria Governorate.

Thanks also to the City Planning Office, the Office of Regional Growth, Environment and Planning, and the Royal Institute of Technology, all in Stockholm.

Finally, we would like to thank all the creative people, officials and organizations that participated in the discussions and workshops. This project would never have been possible without your engagement, your thoughts, and your knowledge.
Introduction
CONTRIBUTING ESSAY
THE CITY OF LAYERS
Joachim Granit, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, Färgfabriken, Center for Art & Architecture, Stockholm

THE MEETING WITH ALEXANDRIA in Spring 2011, after the big upheaval that the whole of Egypt had been through, was an experience in many ways. The city is worn-down with an intense life, lots of people and ideas—everything in a complex blend where the past meets the present. You could feel it in the air that there had been a change in the Egyptian society. It was liberating to see happy and proud people who had just had the chance to vote in the first round of fair elections.

Situated by the Mediterranean Sea, Alexandria has been a center for thoughts and ideas for millenniums. Here, different cultures and religions have met and been inspired by and confronted with each other. The traces of these trails of thoughts can still be found today in different layers, both physical and mental.

It was this process of movement and meetings that we wished to highlight when, in co-operation with Gudran Association for Art and Development, Alexandria University, and the Swedish Institute Alexandria, we decided to organize the first New Urban Topologies in the Middle East. When we came back to Alexandria six months later to carry out the New Urban Topologies program, the atmosphere in the city had changed. The euphoria from the past months had turned into uncertainty about the future, and impatience with the fact that a new Egypt seemed to take its time to be formed. Who and what groups of people would take over power?

On our way to the Swedish Institute, walking along the beautiful Corniche, we passed the courthouse where the trial against two police officers accused of the death of young activist Khaled Said had just begun. The web page We are all Khaled Said had led the way for the revolt, and the tension in the air was obvious. The Military was present and a number of combat vehicles were parked on the street. I saw gripping scenes with people who expressed a deep sense of despair; people who fought for their rights.

Change takes time, and Egypt will eventually find its way forward. How, and in what way, is at the present moment hard to tell. During days of seminars, excursions and intense workshops, the temperature rose. Through meetings, discussions and working together new ideas took shape.

The questions were related to the planning of the city and a possible path to democracy. Alexandria worked as a catalyst for a future Egypt. It became an important experience for all of us, both the ones active in Alexandria and the ones who traveled from Stockholm, Amman, Istanbul, Damascus, Beirut, and Cairo. We all had different experiences from working with culture, entrepreneurship, universities and the public sector. The diversity created energy.

The first cities were founded almost six thousand years ago, today they symbolize our civilizations. The cities will outlive most of us, but, while we are active in them we have a unique opportunity to create conditions for functioning and exciting urban environments, both for ourselves and for generations to come. We all have a responsibility and we must use it in a clever way. We, who represent Färgfabriken, believe that new structures and new contexts can arise as we work with different sectors of the society and create informal meetings between different groups and wills—with and without power.

During this period that we are referring to as the Arab Spring we have seen clearly that it is in the public spaces that debates take place and where the people challenge the political structures. In Sweden, as in many other countries around the world, there has been a discussion about how these “lungs” should be managed so that they can continue to exist and expand. This important question, along with many other issues that came up during the intense days in October 2011 will be discussed further in this book.

Alexandria has something special. In cities where everything has not been designed and processed in detail, there are many opportunities for an intense dynamic life. This is in strong contrast to my own hometown, Stockholm. I cannot help compare with the present Swedish situation. In our eagerness to plan and structure everything, have we in the process lost what is informal and coincidental, the things that give our cities a soul?

The purpose of New Urban Topologies in Alexandria was to create a mental sphere for a new inventory of the many creative resources that exist in the city, all within a framework of history, culture and future possibilities.
CONTRIBUTING ESSAY

TO RECYCLE NEGLECTED ARCHITECTURAL SPACES

Sameh El Halawany, ARTIST, GENERAL MANAGER,
Gudran Association for Art and Development, Alexandria

ARCHITECTURE IS ONE of the many faces of art whose influence extends through the whole lifetime of human civilization. Any careful observer would see how "architecture" as an art, from the very beginning, controls the daily life and future of people by imposing the nature of their use of the urban space in which they live. We can say that the effect of architecture on the human community is not any less than its effect on the individual. We can easily observe the changes of life that occur to a family, as it moves from one urban space to another. Here we admit that "family" is the primary community. The architect cannot predict the results of his interference as of the range of socio-economic transformations and socio-political changes that will happen to this family after a while.

I believe it is fruitful to look at architectural sites in a similar way. Whether economic like factories and markets, or places of service like hospitals, slaughter-houses, metro and bus stations, these architectural spaces are planned to be used for the service and development of the society. As time passes, they are often no longer fit for the function they were built for. This can make them undesirable and neglected. Moreover, rumors and myths may be spun about them just to emphasize their dereliction after the absence of society's capacity to develop or recycle them.

What we at Gudran Association for Art and Development aspire to achieve is to participate in creating a better life for all members of society; through creating, activating and running a contemporary cultural reality capable of being renewed, interacting with all historical variables. This leads to an exchange of experiences and knowledge between cultures as well as producing contemporary art that will express the state of society here and now in our day-to-day reality.

Having this as our vision and ambition, there are many problems and difficulties we have to face. They vary from the conflict of cultures between people from different countries, classes of the same society, up to the kind of architecture society produces, unable to solve and predict its future problems.
For example, if we look at different industrial architectural spaces such as petroleum refineries and petrochemical plants we realize that they were planned to be located away from the residential zone of the towns. But not so long after, the city creeps towards these spaces. Over time, the importance of their existence increases as new communities grow around them. I expect that these buildings will lose their role, especially with the end of the era of oil and its derivatives, and new buildings with a strange architectural nature will appear within—not outside of—most big cities in the world.

I believe the general trend, according to the international investment fever, will stimulate the society to recycle the land of these industrial sites to be converted into residential communities. Nevertheless, I think that any housing exploitation of these districts is completely wrong, as they were not originally planned for this purpose. Here we should note that such problems exist all around the globe.

Instead of turning those sites into residential areas, the other faces of art should be used to overcome this problem. Industrial areas should be recycled to be artistic spaces, where theater, music, visual arts and other contemporary arts are practiced. The revival and reconsideration of these neglected architectural spaces would quickly affect human daily life in the environment surrounding these sites.

New focuses of human activities will be created, around them waves of socio-economic movements will be formed, giving back these previously neglected spaces their lost vitality. Making them able to co-exist with other more vital sites will enrich life in the society in general. But we should take into account the necessity of studying each neglected space apart, and suggesting the right artistic approach for dealing with it.

Our models in El-Max, El-Dokan, and El-Cabina are good examples of this indirect effect of artistic activity on these kinds of spaces and the different aspects of human activities whether economic, social or even political.

In the fishing village of El-Max, the buildings were restored artistically through many collective artistic activities which slowly put pressure on the executive authorities of Alexandria governorate to stop their plan to abolish the village and, moreover, changed the notorious reputation Alexandrians had about the village in general.

I think one of the most important aspects of this concept is how these newly rediscovered sites play an effective role in developing the socio-economic environment around them. This stimulates the community to rediscover its potentials and to voluntarily present these neglected spaces for art and artists after realizing their role and its importance and supporting the general concept of sustainability.

This is also what happened in the case of El-Cabina, which is a new art space in Alexandria. The site was a small yard and an abandoned technical room of an old famous cinema, The Rialto. The owners came to us in Gudran Association for Art and Development to recycle the space to be an artistic one. They believed that it could play a role in creating an economic boom for the urban area around it in being a meeting point for exchange of knowledge and experiences among different social categories in all Alexandria.

Envisaged as a space for experimentation and rehearsal by young local artists, musicians and writers, the focus is now to work on developing new and young audiences and to provide space and services to emerging artists. By creating a café and a reading room with WiFi access as well as an affordable membership scheme the new space will attempt to attract new audiences as well as generate some earned income.

Another project of ours to connect art to community is El-Dokan: a two storey shop in the heart of a vital trade area in Alexandria, Elmansheya—which lacks such spaces that are interested in exhibiting art works of modern Egyptian, Arab and international artists. Downstairs, El-Dokan provides the opportunity to exhibit works of plastic art, hold artistic workshops for different ages in several genres, and present musical and theatrical performances as well as literary readings. Upstairs is devoted to selling artistic handicrafts beside literary and artistic books.

Every rediscovered neglected site has got special characteristics whether architectural or topographical, or through its relations with its surroundings. It is therefore natural that every space has got a different access or approach to artistic work, which can make the adjacent community understand and appreciate its necessity.

A society can support its culture without much money or effort. Offering its neglected spaces to engaged artists is an effective way to make the aspired change for each society that suffers from economic and social problems. And the places will get a chance to develop and interact within a contemporary context again.
INTRODUCTION

New Urban Topologies participants visiting the cotton district, Minet el-Bassal.

CONTRIBUTING ESSAY

INSPIRING PROCESS OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Cecilia Sternemo, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, Swedish Institute Alexandria

THE SWEDISH INSTITUTE ALEXANDRIA (SwedAlex) was inaugurated in the year 2000 following an agreement between the governments of Egypt and Sweden. The main goal of the institute is to promote dialogue between Europe and the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) in order to help Europeans and people in the region better understand each other. SwedAlex seeks to promote sustainable political, economic and social development in the MENA region. It brings together people for dialogue in a wide range of topics. SwedAlex organizes seminars, conferences and workshops, giving participants of different strata an opportunity to meet.

Thinkers, philosophers, religious leaders, researchers, politicians, students, journalists and other experts meet at SwedAlex. Difference of opinion is considered an advantage but discussions should be based on respect of the other and their views.

New Urban Topologies is a dialogue project that in its essence inspires a process of participatory democracy. SwedAlex has witnessed how decision-makers, architects, artists, experts and researchers, students and civil society advocates in Alexandria have met and discussed prospects for their city and how these discussions and networks have continued and moved beyond the project itself. In a participatory process, citizens are able to take part in the decision-making process and affect the outcome of the decision. Participatory democracy is central to Swedish society and Färgfabriken has developed a method in the field of urban planning that embodies this approach and creates a platform for dialogue and communication between different groups and the public.

This project is not merely bringing together representatives from Alexandria and Sweden but also linking cities in the MENA region together, thus giving the opportunity of sharing urban planning experiences and views on each other’s cities.

SwedAlex is pleased to work with Färgfabriken, the City of Alexandria, Alexandria University and Gudran Association for Art and Development in this important and fruitful dialogue where the evolving synergies and co-operation between the contributors is a true inspiration.
CONTRIBUTING ESSAY

ON NEW URBAN TOPOLOGIES

Thomas Lundh, PROJECT DIRECTOR New Urban Topologies, Färgfabriken Center for Contemporary Art & Architecture, Stockholm

FÄRGFABRIKEN IS A SWEDISH CENTER for contemporary art and architecture with an international approach. For more than a decade, Färgfabriken has been active in the fields of urban planning, sociology, and architecture. Färgfabriken in Stockholm has a dual function, both being an exhibition space and a meeting place for different disciplines. Facilitating new networks between public and private spheres, Färgfabriken wants to promote new ideas and strategies for our urban future.

A successful example using this method was Stockholm at Large, a project in several steps that Färgfabriken initiated in 2001 and produced. Here, the future of Stockholm in a long-term perspective was analyzed, considering a population growth of 600,000 people. This is one of several projects in the fields of urban planning and development, all with different starting points and perspectives, which Färgfabriken has organized. By making the complex process of urban development more accessible through exhibitions, seminars and publications, we believe more people will find it meaningful to engage in the development of their cities.

With extensive experience in initiating meetings on the city’s future and potential, Färgfabriken decided to fund a program with an international scope in 2009, New Urban Topologies. The aim of the initiative is to create an open and free platform for an exchange of experiences between the different stakeholders and the participating cities. This is in order to strengthen political participation and transboundary networks.

At the moment, New Urban Topologies is focusing on projects in the Middle East, the Balkans and in Eastern Europe. There are also plans for programs in South East Asia. Up until now, we have executed projects in Chisinau in Moldova, Minsk in Belarus, Skopje in Macedonia, Alexandria in Egypt, and Amman in Jordan. Our main objective at these sites has been to start a process where Färgfabriken, in conjunction with participating local partners, initiates a discussion regarding urban challenges and possibilities. Together we identify a number of geographical areas of interest for development or general discussion and problem solving. The purpose is not to deliver complete solutions or answers, but to pinpoint different ways of thinking and to address and discuss complex matters.

This book is a result of the implementation of New Urban Topologies in Alexandria that took place in October 2011. Over 60 stakeholders participated, among them were municipal administrators, architects, artists, urban planners, and students, from the cities of Alexandria, Cairo, Amman, Beirut, Istanbul, Damascus and Stockholm.

It is our evaluation that the intentions of New Urban Topologies i.e. to be a stepping stone for new contacts, knowledge and understanding, between different groups have become reality. We have seen how new contacts between different groups within and between the cities have developed after each single New Urban Topologies session. This informal working method has proven an easy way to loosen up hierarchies and what seemed to be cemented power relations.

When we started to plan the New Urban Topologies program in Alexandria we could not imagine how the country would change in the coming year. During this whole significant change, the officials in Alexandria have shown a great openness, curiosity and courage. At their request we are now planning a second New Urban Topologies program in Alexandria with a distinct emphasis on communication with the citizens and their participation in the urban planning process.

THE WORK STRATEGY
Färgfabriken has developed a work strategy for the New Urban Topologies project. In each city, Färgfabriken joins forces with a similar organization. In this particular project we collaborated with Gudran Association for Art and Development in Alexandria. Färgfabriken also works with the local municipal planning authorities, the architecture department in the local university and a Swedish official partner on site. In Alexandria we co-operated with the Urban Planning Department in Alexandria Governorate, the Architecture Department at Alexandria University and the Swedish Institute Alexandria. From Stockholm, we invite participants from the Royal Institute of Technology, the City Planning Office, the Office of Regional Growth, Environment and Planning, and in this case also from the University College of Arts and Crafts. When the project begins on site with seminars and workshops, local independent architects, artists, researchers, undergraduate and Masters students, among others, are also invited.
THE NUT WORK STRATEGY IS DIVIDED INTO FOUR PARTS:

1. Firstly, Färgfabriken hosts a seminar together with its local partners. Here, Färgfabriken presents its working method and an alternative image of the development of the Swedish society. The Swedish representatives give short lectures on the work of their institutions, including urban planning, political processes, strategies for civic participation, and educational systems in the Stockholm region and in Sweden. The representatives from the host city, here Alexandria, and in this particular case also Amman and Beirut, give similar presentations. This part of the project is mainly an exchange of experiences and is open to people invited from each partner’s network of contacts.

2. Secondly, we take an excursion by bus and on foot through the city. Here, possibilities and problems are highlighted in order to generate questions and themes for the upcoming workshop. The purpose of the tour is to show a wide spectrum of what the city in question is today. As a result, the participants get to see many sites that are normally not included in similar architectural excursions—which usually only show recent high-profile projects—as industrial areas and informal settlements.

3. The third part of the NUT project is a workshop. Here participants with various backgrounds and nationalities form several groups, each working with a particular theme. Färgfabriken and its local partners formulate these themes in advance. They are chosen on the basis of the seminar lectures, the informal discussions with, and topics suggested by the local participants, and the issues highlighted and discussed throughout the excursion. During the workshop, each group is assigned to develop their topic as they find appropriate and thereafter come up with concrete suggestions for the future of the city in question. In keeping with their role as facilitators, one or two experienced participants with an outside perspective are included in each group. Their task is not only to join the process but also to offer ideas and facilitate the progress of the workshop.

4. The fourth part is the presentation of the workshop results. Sketches, drawings, texts, and other materials produced within the project are shown, supported by an oral presentation. Each talk is followed by time for questions and discussion. The results are shared with the public online and in a publication that summarizes the complete project and the ideas from the city.
CONTRIBUTING ESSAY

EGYPT TODAY
— A POLITICAL ANALYSIS

Nathalie Besèr, ADVISOR at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, former MIDDLE EAST CORRESPONDENT, Stockholm

IN EGYPT, THE DUST from the dramatic protests in the beginning of 2011 has settled, but the political battle continues. The war for influence and control over the still unfinished revolution is intensifying.

The 18 days of feverish protests in Cairo’s Tahrir Square brought together liberals, religious groups and, by the end, also the Military, and pushed Hosni Mubarak from office, ending 30 years of autocratic rule. The unity and solidarity that characterized this first phase of the Egyptian revolution was possible due to the hatred and fatigue of Mubarak’s regime. The Egypt of today is a divided and polarized Egypt, dominated by fear and uncertainty.

The main battle rages between the strongest centers of power: the Military, the Islamist groups and the liberals. Add to that the new political force: the protester.

The Military was at first seen by many as the body that could safeguard the transition into a more democratic regime, but very soon a disappointment spread over its inability to end the state of emergency, to dismantle the old regime, and to abandon the use of military tribunals. A growing number of Egyptians felt betrayed. New street protests, tweets and blog posts emerged as the protesters feared that the generals might be trying to sabotage the transition into civilian democracy. These events showed not only the disapproval of the Military’s handling of the Revolution, they also showed that the protester, as a political force, had come to Egypt to stay.

During the first stage in the post-Mubarak era, the Military and the Islamists seemed to have found ways to co-operate. The Parliamentary elections gave the Muslim Brotherhood’s "Freedom and Justice Party" the victory, taking more than 40 percent of the seats. The ultraconservative Islamist Salafists won the next largest share of seats. But the friendship between the Islamists and the Military ended after some months, when the Muslim Brotherhood openly confronted the ruling generals and demanded them to hand over power as promised.

The dominant discussion in Egyptian politics is now: who is with the revolution, and who isn’t? Nearly everyone is playing the same game of “takhween”, the act of making your fellow countrymen into traitors. Liberals are accused of being westernized, by both the Military and the Islamists, the Muslim Brotherhood are accused by the Salafists of being too soft and the Military are accused of being pro-Mubarak and pro-America. This rhetoric is an example of how Egypt’s public scene is performing a descent from revolutionary euphoria into paranoia, distrust, and conspiracy theorizing. In the Egypt of today West-Egypt relations are at an all-time low. Not so much because of the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists, but more because the Egyptian Military has whipped up anti-American sentiment. In an attempt to show the people that its old ties and dependency on the US and the West are gone, the generals fuel the anti-Americanism that is ever present in the Egyptian society. Nineteen Americans are put on trial, facing up to five years in prison, accused of working for American NGOs.
The Egyptian transition is a troublesome one, mostly because of a muddled political process that lacks both legitimacy and clarity. Within the regime itself, there are various centers of power and decision making: the Military, the enormous bureaucracy inhabited by Mubarak leftovers, and the security services.

There is an interesting comparison to make with Tunisia. Its transition is different, in some parts thanks to the “Higher Committee for the Achievement of Revolutionary Objectives”. The Committee was responsible for managing the transition and was accepted as legitimate by all of the country’s main political forces.

In Egypt this lack of legitimacy of the body that is supposed to handle the transition and the lack of clarity on who is actually in charge of it, has resulted in uncertainty. Not only over the role of the Parliament, the Judiciary and the Presidency but also over the whole process itself. The feeling of insecurity, of fear of what is coming is spreading in Egypt.

Both Egypt and Tunisia are facing enormous economic challenges, most of all, in job creation, in attracting investment and for the tourism sector. Since the uprisings began, most governments in the region have tried to appease the public by accommodating growing social demands, instead of handling the deeply rooted economic problems. The biggest challenge for the coming years will be to try to turn this negative development into a good one. But unpopular reforms, however difficult they may be, will be necessary to sustain political gains and improve economies in the long term. That is for the new governments to handle.

A polarized society, huge democratic challenges and a possible economic meltdown does not sound like the most tempting starting point for new rulers. But the new rulers in Egypt actually have an identity crisis to handle too. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists do not have any experience in the handling of a country. They have to adapt to a totally new identity and role. They have to transform from religious groups in opposition, with no or little will to hold governmental power, into responsible political leaders for a whole population. They have to reconcile their historic religious opposition missions with more recent commitments to pluralistic democracy. That might be the biggest challenge of all.

In the coming years, Egypt will start a bumpy road towards democracy. Yet, even as polarized as its politics is, there is a consensus on the most crucial issue facing the country, the role of the Armed Forces. All major political forces agree that the Military has to withdraw to the barracks and cease to interfere in politics. The great challenge will be to convince the generals to once and for all turn over power to a civilian rule.
ALEXANDRIA IS ONE OF the major cities on the Mediterranean Sea, and plays an essential role in Egyptian economy and its cultural life as the country's oldest and largest port. Alexandria is a longitudinal city with the high-end residential areas close to and parallel to the coast. South of this area are the middle-class districts and behind the railway track and south of the Mahmoudia Canal are the low-income areas, many informally built. The intention of the New Urban Topologies excursion was to look at contrasting parts of Alexandria, and the participants got to visit a diverse selection of areas, places and monuments around the city:

The Mahmoudia Canal, once a clean canal for fishing and transport, is today contaminated because of the lack of maintenance. Nearby are some of the city's many informal housing areas, multi-storey residential buildings erected out of necessity in a city of fast growth, with neither permission nor design regulations.

The Minet El-Bassal District was an important center for cotton manufacturing in the 19th century. Today many of its industrial buildings and warehouses stand empty, but the area is still a vibrant market area for old goods. It is situated near the commercial harbor of Alexandria and adjacent to the city center.

On Saad Zaghoul Square, two obelisks of Cleopatra once stood and there an attempt was also made in the year 1919 to unify the Egyptian people against the British.

Stanley Bridge is a landmark, inspired by the architecture of the Islamic Period and the first bridge in Egypt to be constructed over the sea.
The Alexandria government building was destroyed during the revolution. At first it was burnt with nothing left but the facade. Then also the facade of this well known building collapsed.

**Bibliotheca Alexandrina** was designed by the Norwegian architecture firm Snohetta with support from UNESCO. Today it is a contemporary Alexandrian landmark of international acclaim. However, the new library is not functioning at full capacity as it still has a lack of books, which presently makes it more of a cultural center.

**The Chatby-Aflaton Street** hosts educational complexes that are examples of “Revivalism”, an architectural style that uses the motifs and imagery of ancient Egypt.

The palace and garden of El Montazah is the former summer residence of Egypt’s sovereigns. Nearby are high-end hotels and beach resorts. Most of the beaches are private, only one is open to the public.

The excavation area of Kom el Dikka accommodates architectural remnants of the Greco-Roman, Arab, the Ottoman and the modern periods, highlighting the many historical layers of the city, as Roman Theaters and old villas.

**BOOK STRUCTURE**

As each city has its own unique conditions, the program and results of NUT will differ from one site to the next. The following chapters originate from the main concerns identified in Alexandria that became the base for the workshops’ groups named: Vision and Identity; Participation and Communication; Public Space; Transport and Public Utilities; Case Study: Minet El-Bassal, the Cotton District. The book’s thematic chapters include the workshop presentations. In each chapter the reader will also find interviews with participants and citizens of Alexandria conducted throughout the span of the visits, as well as shorter freestanding statements. The book also includes essays written by contributing authors in retrospect.
CHAPTER 1

Rooted Visions

CONTRIBUTING ESSAY
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MUST BE GUARANTEED

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WE NEED SOME REAL CHANGE

CONTRIBUTING ESSAY
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HIDDEN TREASURY

INTERVIEW
THE CHALLENGE OF URBAN GROWTH
CONTRIBUTING ESSAY

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MUST BE GUARANTEED

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"Alexandria, is the song of the times
and history’s beloved city.
I do not know if I live in it,
or if it lives in me”.

THIS IS A FAMOUS QUOTE by Alexander the Great about Alexandria, the city that was built by that great Greek commander in 331 BC when he assigned his engineer Dinocrates to design the city after deciding on its location on the Mediterranean. There, he said his well-known quote: "Here shall I build the city I have always dreamt of.”

Alexandria is the second capital of Egypt after Cairo, it is the main Egyptian seaport and one of the most beautiful sea resorts in the Middle East. The population of Alexandria, according to the 2006 census, was roughly 4,123,869 people, and currently between 5,5 and 6,5 million. This population is quite diverse: workers, peasants, bedouins, traders, employees and academics among others. Similarly, the economy of Alexandria is varied and diverse: agricultural, industrial, commercial and financial.

Alexandria lies on lat. 31 to the north with a coastline stretching for about 70 km northwest of the Delta. It is bordered in the north by the Mediterranean Sea and in the south by Lake Mariout up to the Alexandria-Cairo desert road, Abu Qir Gulf and Edko in the east and Sidi Krair in the west, up to the Alexandria-Matrouh Highway. The total area of the governorate is roughly 2400 square kilometers. Alexandria includes two cities, seven administrative districts and five main villages as listed below:

Cities:
1. Alexandria
2. Borg El-Arab

Administrative Districts:
1. Al-Montazah
2. East District

With its geographic location, Alexandria is Egypt’s main seaport, one of the most important on the Mediterranean. Alexandria includes the following harbors:

A. The Eastern Harbor:
This serves fishing boats and yachts, and along it are a number of sports and social clubs e.g. the Tiro Club, the Yacht Club, the Marine Scouts Club as well as the Aquarium Institute and the Oceanography Institute. The area around the harbor is open to the public.

B. The Western Harbor:
This serves both passenger and cargo ships.

C. Abu Qir Harbor

D. Qamariyya Harbor:
This is not a typical harbor but rather a station that facilitates entry of oil tankers for Sumed in Sidi Krair.

Alexandria is one of the oldest and most prestigious cities of the world and has a number of well known historical sites such as the old Alexandria Lighthouse, one of the old seven wonders and on whose remains Qaitbey Fortress was built. There is also the new Library of Alexandria (Bibliotheca Alexandrina) that was built on the same site occupied by the old library with some funding from UNESCO and other donor countries. The library provides room for up to 8 million volumes of books, a number of exhibition halls, a modernized conference center as well as a planetarium.
SIGNIFICANCE OF URBAN PLANNING
Planning for land use in the city is part of a more comprehensive planning process. Allocating land for urban investment in Alexandria is done on the basis of:
1. The plan must adopt an “ideal use” principle, since each piece of land must serve public interest. Landowners typically want to exploit their land in a way that will yield maximum revenues and profit.
2. The plan must adopt the "multiplicity of use" principle, quite often used in cities with scarcity of land and, generally, a higher competitiveness among urban uses in densely populated areas.

Urban planning is distinctly an organized assessment aiming at selecting sustained land use patterns to satisfy population needs and, at the same time, preserve the environment as well as study the current situation of urban land use to assess its positive features for development and ideal use, and identify negative features to find appropriate solutions. In urban planning, geographers must be consulted since they can offer their expertise and relevant information that may aid in the planning study of the city through identification of its natural characteristics. Furthermore, technological development is known to enhance planning efficiency, the quality of study and obtaining the best results in a limited period of time.

THE JOB OF THE PLANNER
A good planner is one who can solve the problems of the city and the population in a wise and legal manner as well as follow up on developments on the plan. Before starting a plan, a good planner needs to collect sufficient data on the topic under study and analyze such data to arrive at the problem, and work hard to solve it through a well-timed program carried out in a number of stages.

To accomplish the planning process, societal and public participation must be guaranteed. This can be achieved through a number of forums and public and electronic meetings etc. through which the opinion of the public may be surveyed in relation to what the plan aims to achieve, and thus public acceptance of the plan is secured. Therefore, public participation in the study of the plan may alert experts to some issues they might otherwise have overlooked, or suggestions that might be useful in desired planning. One of the most important parameters in the planning study is to consider the social aspect and the current and proposed future situation.

OBJECTIVES OF URBAN PLANNING FOR ALEXANDRIA
1. Developing the city’s urban planning in accordance with scientific designing.
2. Guaranteeing the distribution of developmental urban projects equally in all the regions of the governorate, parallel with the circumstances, resources and needs of each region/district so that integrated development for each region is achieved.
3. Encouraging projects and industries on which construction and urban planning depend in each region and in accordance with its resources.
4. Encouraging ideal land use/exploitation, organizing its functions and using it for various purposes.
5. Protecting agricultural land and securing it from violations.
6. Preserving the environment and water passageways, such as beaches, valleys and lakes, for their vital importance for Alexandria, as well as preserving natural wealth.
7. Preparing plans for cities and villages and developing the different agricultural areas on which houses were erratically built, and raising their urban standards through provision of facilities and public services.
8. Developing slum areas.
9. Mapping archeological and historical sites in coordination with the authorities concerned.
10. Updating the strategic planning for Alexandria up to the year 2023 and creating in the city extension and expansion areas that will allow the reduction of population in heavily populated areas, prioritization and adequate organization of land use, and mapping the different activity sites for the comfort of city inhabitants as well as satisfying their needs in a legal fashion. Equally important is to establish links and harmony between space and densely populated areas of the city, and to find solutions for communication/transportation, one of the most important and persistent problems facing Alexandria.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD FOR ALEXANDRIA
One of the most important challenges confronting Alexandria is that of the informal settlements, so called slum areas. These are 35 areas and have been classified into “safe” and “unsafe”. Slum areas often crop up behind the back of urban planning, and most of them are built on state-owned land, either agricultural or unused residential land that is violated and turned into slum areas. Gradually, these slum areas become fertile soil for thugs, violence, extremism, addiction and social and moral degeneration in the backyard of Alexandria. Furthermore, they are a threat to
the whole society considering the fact that they are unlicensed entities, have no facilities or services, and are therefore seen by many as potential time bombs, and a real danger to the city of Alexandria.

THE CAUSES OF SLUM AREAS ARE WIDESPREAD
1. The sharp rise in internal immigration from rural Egypt to Cairo and Alexandria for the simple reason that rural areas lack real development as well as jobs and entertainment for their residents.
2. Total absence of serious monitoring of slum areas, and in particular the total absence of any role by the local councils concerned since, according to the law, those councils should have removed any type of housing that emerged without license.
3. Scarcity of decent homes built by the government for low-income and utterly poor families.

– The social and educational state of most slum area inhabitants is completely different from that of the rest of Egyptian society: most of them work either for the unofficial sector of the state or are unemployed. In most of these families, the mother is usually the family provider due to the death/absence of the father or due to divorce.
– The illiteracy rate in slum areas is considerably high (estimated roughly at 80 percent for males and 90 percent for females) and the main reason for this is the extremely poor economic conditions in this type of society whose sole concern is to put food on the table.
– Health conditions in slums are deteriorating: disease is very common especially pulmonary problems, asthma, allergy and kidney failure, the main causes of which are problems related to poor sanitation, polluted drinking water and insects living on heaps of waste.

ROLE OF THE STATE IN SLUM AREA DEVELOPMENT
1. Speedy implementation of Act 119 for 2008, which necessitates that the authorities remove any unlicensed lodging or buildings on agricultural land at the time these violations are made.
2. Classification of slum areas that will allow better handling of each area individually and in accordance with its individual problems e.g.:
   a. Some areas can be planned and may take new streets and thus may allow the introduction of facilities and services such as electricity, water and sanitation. Once these services are provided, a slum area may be said to be developed from a social, health and economic point of view.
   b. A number of buildings in some areas could be removed, the inhabitants of which would then be transferred to new homes provided by the state for low-income people. The space resulting from the removed buildings is to be used for the provision of facilities and services to the whole area. Furthermore, job opportunities must be provided and modest aid offered.
   c. Renewal and replacement of slum areas in Alexandria as was the case with the areas of Waboor El-Gaz, El-Tobgiah, Al-Rahma Street and El-Mafrooza. This was carried out in coordination with the Slum Development Fund, initiated by a national resolution towards the end of 2008. In this very first project, all slum homes were removed while inhabitants were transferred to flats on state-owned property.
3. Ownership of state-owned property must be transferred to its new inhabitants, which will guarantee appropriate maintenance to these areas, an important social and psychological factor.
4. Encouraging NGOs and businessmen to take part in the development process since most slum areas are located in close proximity with the rich areas of Alexandria, which creates slum dwellers’ feelings of injustice and grudge, and quite often generates violence and crime that affect all classes of society. One top priority for the youth taking part in the development of slum areas is illiteracy programs.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS IN ALEXANDRIA
1. A 300-feddan project in Montazah District
2. The Back of Carrefoure Project
3. The Waste Recycling Project in Zayyateen Village
4. The proposed Olympic Village Project
5. Residential areas in the expansion west of Alexandria
HOPES FOR ALEXANDRIA
1. “Strategic plan 2030”, currently under study, needs to be completed with greater speed. Simultaneously, expansive housing areas need to be started west of Alexandria, together with finding appropriate solutions for road and transportation problems and deciding on a number of developmental projects for Alexandria that take into consideration its climate, nature of terrain and its unique location on the Mediterranean.
2. Allocation of land through plans including cultural, educational and sports activities in different fields.
3. Building multiple industrial and craft zones that will provide job opportunities and put an end to unemployment.
4. Preventing violations against agricultural land.

INTERVIEW
WE NEED SOME REAL CHANGE
Randa Mahmood Hamdy, SHOP ASSISTANT, Alexandria

Why have you chosen to live in Alexandria?
I was born in Fayoum, a small town southwest of Cairo. My family moved here because of my father’s job. Coming to Alexandria meant I could attend university. I studied history and literature here. But I have forgotten everything about my literature because I never got to work in my field.

Why not?
Look, there are no job opportunities in my field of study at all. Here in Egypt we are used to this. We graduate from university and we do something different. I didn’t want to wait for a job with my qualifications. And it would have been impossible anyway, even if I waited for years. Now I am engaged and about to get married and I don’t even consider working with my qualifications. I have this shop assistant job temporarily for the time being, until I get married.

What will you do after you get married?
I hope to find a job as a teacher for small kids. I like teaching. There are a lot of people who cannot read or write. It is a big problem and we must solve this.

What is it that you appreciate about Alexandria?
Alexandria is a very beautiful city. As they say, the “bride of the Mediterranean”. It has charming sights. Its inhabitants are good people. I am proud that I live here and was educated here. That’s all.
In what way did the city change after the revolution?

I would say there are no differences so far. No elections, no new president. Nothing happened that tells us that the revolution has succeeded besides that Mubarak had to go. But of course, it was good that the corrupt regime was removed. We are hoping we will have a better president who will solve the problems we suffer from.

What is the most critical problem in this city?

The lack of security after the revolution in fact is the biggest problem in Alexandria. Before the revolution it was easier to walk alone in the streets as a woman. Now we have to stay at home in the evenings. No one worries about the other. We are afraid all the time. The only thing we can do is to wait for a good president who is democratic and just. We need some real change.

How is it to find somewhere to live?

Difficult. Another problem here in Alexandria is that young people cannot find jobs. Young men sit in cafés all the time and this is a big problem for Egyptian girls who then cannot get married. Marriage is expensive.

Where do you stay?

My fiancé and I both live in Agami. It is a new area with residential houses and factories and it is very crowded. But it is also a beautiful area. All newly married people live there because the prices are much lower than elsewhere. But it is becoming more expensive. I bought my flat roughly four years ago and it wasn’t as expensive as it is today.

What do you think about the traffic in Alexandria?

It is very bad. With this number of people, cars and minibuses in the streets a lot of accidents happen. I take the taxi here every day, back and forth. We need to build tunnels, both for cars and an underground metro. We also need traffic police officers.

What are your thoughts about the informal housing districts in Alexandria?

Here in Alexandria we have very many slum areas. The government, with all its efforts, cannot remove these districts. They are trying but whatever they do, people come and build these slums again. This is a difficult issue, and some people think it is ruining the look of Alexandria. But apart from the crowded streets, the lack of security and the pollution of the environment, the housing situation is one of the current critical problems in Alexandria. If the government removes these informally built houses there are no alternative homes for these people. The government must provide flats for young men and young women.

CONTRIBUTING ESSAY

ALEXANDRIA FROM OUTSIDE AND IN

Maria Lantz, President, the University College of Arts and Crafts, Stockholm

WHEN I CAME TO Alexandria for the first time I approached the city with great excitement. The name “Alexandria” was for me so much more than the name of a city: it implied history, myth and culture. “Alexandria” denoted a melting pot of differences mixed into something larger than its individual parts, “Alexandria” for me was the city of possibilities—but also the name of a somewhat decadent and sometimes dangerous state. However, the most significant thing for me was the image “Alexandria”. There was a series of pictures in my head, all black and white photographs. One was depicting a European gentleman in a white linen suit standing in the harbor around 1920. The next one shows an Egyptian woman and her daughter, both of them dressed in fashionable clothes of the 1930s. The photograph was taken in an exclusive room, probably in a hotel. The third picture that was stuck in my head was an architectural photograph taken around 1940. Houses of Italian style with commercial signs in Greek and Arabic on the facades were lined up along a street with trolleys and palm trees.

All of these photographs are pictures that exist. The man in the harbor is a Swedish gentleman, trading wood from the north of Sweden. He is the great-grandfather of a friend in Stockholm; the picture sits in her home. The woman in the oriental suit is the great-grandmother of a friend in Cairo, the girl in the photograph is her grandmother. The great-grandmother was a singer, almost as popular as Oum Kalthoum and she lead an exciting life in Alexandria as a liberated single mother with her daughter. The architectural image can be found in one of my books about architecture—Alexandria is, as we know, a treasure of 19th century architecture.

What these three pictures have in common is their air of prosperity. Looking at them today without having been to Alexandria makes you wonder how the place came to be, what happened next. If one adds the famous book the Alexandria Quartet to the scene, we are definitely on to that curious question of how the next chapter turns out. And here the problem starts.

When a picturesque memory of a recent past is transmitted and projected into a here-and-now we are with no doubt facing a problem. No matter
how much we reason and know that the past is gone and no more to be, we are still looking for it, we—as Westerners, historians, and intellectuals—crave the past and celebrate it when we see its fragments. An old sign still on a wall, a colonial interior—we love it. We are satisfied when we recognize the images, and disappointed if the image is not recognizable.

Interestingly, there are rarely any new pictures of Alexandria. Even today those old pictures are often published, as if that image of the past is more genuine than the place is today.

My first trip to Alexandria was in 2005. The city was definitely not the one in my architectural book, although I recognized some of the houses and the palm trees. Alexandria was, at first glance, wild. The car traffic was chaotic. Street vendors pulled their charts along the streets among the cars, the noise of horning and shouting was loud. In some areas the straight streets had turned into mazes of market stands. Goats waiting to be slaughtered were fenced in the pockets of the alleys and on top of the old buildings new, informal houses had been erected. No, this was not my image of "Alexandria". But it was great! I discovered a city of diversity that was probably greater than it had ever been. Alexandria was transformed from a melting pot of Mediterranean cultures to a melting pot of Egyptian culture. Alexandria today hosts a great mix of classes and backgrounds—many people have come from the countryside seeking a better life in the city. Alexandria is then still a city of prosperity and ambition for lots of people. Only not Europeans... However, new cultures can still develop and overlap with the old ones, feed from what was left and develop in a "glocal" context. So, the question is how to make use of the situation when looking forward—in a post-revolution situation? How to see the city of Alexandria for what it is—not what it used to be?

During New Urban Topologies in Alexandria I was in the workshop group with the theme Vision and Identity. We saw a present scattered identity, but this could also be seen as an asset: there are many identities, many new images, and therefore many possibilities to build upon. The task must then be to find common grounds when looking forward to develop a future Alexandria. We scanned our knowledge about everything in the city—big and small—and we identified five areas that could be enhanced. First of all, Alexandria is that old, cosmopolitan city with a heritage of cultural institutions, arts and music. This should not be seen as nostalgia but rather as assets just as important to the citizens as clean air or public transportation. Another asset for the city is the location. It is a coastal city and could be made even cleaner, the seaside could be more accessible and pedestrian-friendly with a new fishing port for the local markets as well as for export to other nearby places. The harbor can also be a meeting spot. Alexandria spreads along the sea. It is a linear city with a great distance between its eastern and western part. Therefore, segregation of different socio-economic areas happens easily, and this development does not lead to the inclusive city that we wish for. This issue can be dealt with by improving public transport and making it worthwhile to, every now and then, visit other parts of the city. One should not be stuck only in one's own neighborhood or workplace. For instance, an amusement park, museums or other institutions—like the Alexandria Library—could trigger this.

Alexandria has several local industries, as well as local arts and crafts production. These should be emphasized and the stories of this heritage could be collected and published. It is important to spread knowledge about what the city contains among the inhabitants. Then new ideas can emerge. Alexandria—as we have pointed out—is a city of an interesting architectural history. Buildings and history (old and contemporary) should be celebrated.

With this brief scan of the assets of Alexandria, we came back to the question: how? How to make these things happen, who should do it? The group made clear that in a post-revolutionary setting, democracy from
below must be encouraged. Therefore, it is of uttermost importance to start speaking about dreams, demands and desires along with information to enhance knowledge. One young man told me that the Egyptian revolution was not just an uprising against Mubarak. It was just as much a revolution where the young generation revolted against their parents’ generation—their ideals and lifestyle. “I am so angry with my parents,” this young man said, “my parents and their generation only thought about themselves. They never taught us how to build a society, how to care about others.”

Here, I think, lies a lot of the truth and frustration with the Egyptian society. But this is also what should be taken into account as something positive: a lot of energy and joy can be found when this is challenged. Now it is time to start talking about society—not about oneself. By encouraging neighborhood organizations such as a local mosque or a church, womens’ groups or a local businessmen association, one could start discussing common grounds and ideals. Top down and bottom up—both ways are needed in order to make the development sustainable. Not until people get organized and engaged, can a true democracy develop. And in order to start this process, city planning in a local neighborhood is a very fruitful way to get going. Here, trust can be built along with physical constructions—such as a shelter from the sun at the bus stop, a waste container by the market place or a day care center for kids. All of a sudden there is meaning added in the everyday life that we share, in the space we occupy and in the language we know.

Finally, the young man I met told me about his dream for the future. It was not about buildings, nor about garbage, public transport or institutions. Rather, I would say, it was about urbanity, life style and the future. He wanted a new mindset and he concluded: “I hope the next revolution will be a sexual revolution!”

We all have the right to dream. To express and discuss our visions are the most important thing; by doing so we can slowly figure out how to live together. There is no time to waste. In a post revolutionary situation we need to start immediately.

WORKSHOP PRESENTATION

THE FIVE IDENTITIES

ALEXANDRIA DOES NOT HAVE just one, but many identities. Does this mean that the city is scattered? Or are the many diverse identities a character per se that is enriching and should be enhanced? The participants in the New Urban Topologies workshop stressed the latter. They stated that only in admitting the many identities of the city can productive visions for the future emerge. However, they believed that the inhabitants, the government, and the tourists need a common ground to agree on. Therefore the team identified five areas that they advise should be enhanced in forming the present identity of Alexandria:

THE COSMOPOLITAN CITY
Alexandria has a rich heritage of cultural institutions, arts and music and many layers of history that have physically put their mark on the city. Alexandria is continuously between past and present, which means that its history must be emphasized in any solutions for the future of the city. The many cultural institutions, from the Bibliotheca to independent initiatives from the citizens, should be included in this identity. The stories about Alexandria’s cultural past are unfortunately not very well compiled.

THE COASTAL CITY
This character should be enhanced even more. The beaches and the Corniche could be made even cleaner, more accessible and pedestrian friendly. There is also a need to create better access to the fishing port and make the fishing industry more visible.

THE LINEAR CITY
Due to this notion, it is important to work against urban sprawl and the segregation of different socio-economic areas. When planning the possible expansions of the city, the informal housing areas and public spaces must be taken into consideration. As for the long absence of functioning planning laws and regulations, it is more appropriate to guide rather than to direct the urban path of the city.

THE CITY OF LOCAL INDUSTRIES AND HANDICRAFTS
This is a vast field of possibilities and the stories of this heritage should be collected and published. Food production should be a natural part of Alexandria, as it is a coastal city that has active fishing. Tourists appreciate
seeing the authentic fabric of the city. Furthermore, as around 85 percent of the garbage is being recycled in Cairo then Alexandria should find inspiration in that.

THE CITY OF DIVERSE ARCHITECTURE
Instead of seeing diversity in architecture as a burden, this character should be celebrated and emphasized. Destructive actions to historical buildings and sites, from ancient remnants to industrial districts, must be prevented. These structures are usually not used to their full potential. There are many examples of tearing down significant buildings and just adding new ones without seeing the value of the original buildings.

After identifying these themes, the team members concluded that it is important to believe in the process itself and that the communication should be both ways, bottom-up and top-down. Small steps must be taken, even if a long perspective is applied. The process should be characterized by transparency, public ownership and an active and visible role for women.

A BEAUTIFUL HOMETOWN

Julia George, RETIRED SCHOOL LIBRARIAN, Alexandria

How long have you lived here in Alexandria?
I was born in Cairo, but when I got married in 1964 I moved to Alexandria.

What do you like about this city?
The closeness to the sea, the weather, and that the city is very beautiful.

Which are the main problems here?
Alexandria is very crowded, and at certain times during the day the traffic is too heavy. But this is the case with every city in the world, even New York. And now that I am retired I can avoid rush hours. Another difficulty is that it is hard for people to find somewhere to live. I think we have to build more affordable houses and renovate those we have, if they have historic value. If not, I think they can be demolished and replaced with new homes.

Where do you live in Alexandria?
I live alone in a three-room apartment in Cleopatra, a middle-class district. My husband passed away and my two children live abroad, my daughter in Switzerland and my son in Canada.

How has the city changed since you moved here in the beginning of the 1960s?
In the old days the city was nicer, cleaner, and not as crowded as
it is today. The people were very polite and gentle. Alexandria has become completely different from what I remember, especially the behavior of the people changed completely. They have no manners!

What about the political events during the last year?

We were under a one-man regime for 30 years. He made the country very poor; he never cared for the country. Hopefully Egypt will improve because of the revolution. Yes, I think it will be much better.

But you see no difference so far?

The outcome is not clear yet. But it is clear in people’s behavior that the barrier of fear is now gone. It was forbidden to criticize those in power. People were afraid that they would be put in prison if they spoke of politics. Today you can say whatever you like; no one is going to touch you.

Did you take part in the revolution?

I love the revolution very much; I was always with the revolution. I like the revolutionaries. I hope Egypt will become as beautiful as it always was in the old days. I want Alexandria and all of Egypt to be well and clean and that the poor will become middle class. This was Egypt in the old days and I hope this will happen again.

What do you wish for the future of Alexandria?

My hope is for all of Egypt, not only Alexandria.

And what is that?

Peace.

STATEMENT

HIDDEN TREASURY

WHAT IS AMAZING ABOUT Alexandria is that we have a complete city beneath the city we are in; five cities, actually. Whenever we dig for any building, we find part of a temple or part of a house. We cannot avoid finding things related to different eras of our city.

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CONTRIBUTING ESSAY

MEMORIES AND CITYSCAPE

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IT IS POSSIBLE TO MOVE around for hours in modern Alexandria, the city of some six million inhabitants, without viewing any obvious signs of its unique history and setting. In many parts, the built environment is all dating from the last half century, during which the population has multiplied fivefold, and where the basically flat land may give you little overview. Yet, the famous coastline manifested by its avenue, the Corniche, is never far away, nor is the Lake Mariout or the Mahmoudia Canal. As soon as these reminders of the presence of the Nile and its outflow into the Mediterranean appear in view, the fertile base for Alexandria’s existence becomes visible.

The original city plan was designed by the legendary Greek architect Dinocrates, whose promotion campaign for Alexander the Great was later referred to by Vitruvius, the famous Roman writer on architecture. Dinocrates first proposed a spectacular project for transforming the Greek Mount Athos into an anthropomorphic city. This was however rejected by Alexander, who instead commissioned Dinocrates for the economically and strategically much more profitable Egyptian project. The plan on flat ground was laid out on a basically orthogonal grid bordering the Mediterranean. It is said that Alexander himself traced the street plan on the site with white chalk. Little now remains of this ancient town plan, but the layout of its 30 meters wide central arteries has survived in two present major streets, Rue Fouad and its crossing, Rue Nebi Daniel.

Close to the basically straight coastline there was the small island named Pharos that created a natural basis for shaping the western and eastern harbors. Later, the island was connected to the main land, thus forming a narrow peninsula. Through all centuries this feature has formed the basic source of the life of the city. Rather than some built structures, the distinctly shaped coastline and harbors constitute the element of unchanging continuity of the city, while they also express the other fundamental aspect, that of change and exchange across time and vast geography. The expansion during later times has in some aspects even emphasized the geographic conditions, by continuing the east–west direc-
tion of the basically linear city, sandwiched between the sea and the lake. The island of Pharos, nucleus of the harbors, however also became the site of the most famous building ever of Alexandria, one of the legendary seven wonders of the ancient world. This was the tall lighthouse, named after its island, and marking the outer edge of the two harbors. Pharos was not just a lighthouse guiding the ships but also became the symbol of the city itself, the vertical accent of the otherwise basically flat cityscape. The tower had been built in the early third century BC, one generation after the death of Alexander, when the city was established as the center of learning, culture and commerce of the whole Mediterranean sphere. The lighthouse manifested this centrality, Alexandria being the center not only of its region, but of the entire world. For today’s built townscape the loss of historical presence was therefore in no way more clearly marked than by the disappearance of the Pharos lighthouse some seven hundred years ago in an earthquake.

In spite of the disappearance of this and other important buildings, the later identity of Alexandria has been based largely on the first centuries of its existence, the third century BC onwards, when the city replaced not only the Pharaonic Egyptian capital but also Athens as the center of the classical world. A variety of archaeological sites still exist to remind one of the city’s importance during its early centuries. But not only was the lighthouse destroyed, so was also the famous library and the most notable temples—such as the Serapeum, Caesareum and Isis temple—and the great palaces, along with the grave of Alexander himself.

Absence of architectural survivors from the era of greatness and the replacement of its leading role by other cities seem to be the keywords of Alexandria’s development. Replacement on the grand scale by Rome and Constantinople was followed regionally by Cairo, established as the center of Fatimid Egypt in the 10th century. But also the city of Venice belongs to this story. The bringing of St Mark’s relic from Alexandria to Venice in the 9th century formed the symbolic foundation of Venetian development, but many have observed the parallel conditions regarding location and the economy of both cities. Perhaps even the central role played in Venice by St Mark’s library is a reflection of Alexandria. But the late medieval period when Venice expanded and flourished, as did urban culture in many parts of the world, was one of decline for Alexandria. The earthquake destroying the Pharos could have been regarded as metonymic. The treasures of the city were deported, its two famous obelisks as late as in the 1870s.

This decade, however, was the time when a new era of urban expansion and greatness began. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Alexandria became known as a cosmopolitan center of Mediterranean culture. It was seen as the revival of the original city with its wide cultural connections. This was when the waterfront along the eastern harbor became established with the avenue of the Corniche that still forms the key of the city’s identity. Cotton export was the magnet around which expanding circles of economy and culture were moving. Architecturally this was established by a number of mansions, bank palaces, cafés, hotels, monuments and public buildings designed in eclectic fashions. And still the unique setting was manifested, not only by public life along and around the Corniche but also by everyday areas around the harbors, Lake Mariout and the canal, such as the shipyards and storehouses of Minet el Bassal in the western region. This western area is also where the most traditional quarters still exist, the so-called Turkish town, where groups of two or three-storey houses from the Ottoman period are preserved. In some cases they can now be seen, however, alongside recent 18-storey houses. In probably no other city does the Mediterranean have such a strongly physical presence. A century and a half after the destruction of the Pharos light-
house, its visually important site became marked by the 15th century Qaitbey Fortress. The fortress still exists in a restored version, and at least to some extent is replacing the lighthouse as the signature building of the city. Also some mosque architecture in the historic region, mainly the Sharaf al-Din al-Busiri Mosque and Mausoleum, can be traced to this late medieval period, although most of its present structure are more recent successors using similar architectural language. In fact the minarets of these Egyptian mosques from the late medieval Mamluk period, with a preference for combinations of square and octagonal shapes, can be interpreted as modest reflections of the legendary lighthouse.

The most famous case of Alexandria’s role as the city of lost treasures is however probably not the lighthouse but the Library, this uniquely important home of learning, science and culture established in the early period. Destroyed mainly when Julius Caesar’s troops burned the city in 47 BC, not even its site is known today. This total loss of physical traces, on the other hand, could justify the replacement by the modern library building constructed in the first years of the new millennium, with an expressive coastal location, at some distance from the ancient city area and with a conspicuously contemporary design. The new library seems to establish the connections of past and present, the city not so much of physical survivals of its history but of narratives, cultural achievements and memories. In this way, the Alexandria of today stands as the city of both past and present, where the past is abstractly memorized rather than physically maintained.

Yet, a timeless reference to classical culture can be interpreted in the main columnar space of the new library. In many other recent buildings in the vast modern city, mainly but not only in housing blocks, some much more direct references to classical vocabulary appear, however. This could be interpreted as survivors from the international post-modern period of the 1980s, but locally it is perceived as a revival of Alexandria’s classical identity rather than an outgrowth of a short-lived international movement.

These classical elements seen in many recent multi-storey housing blocks may refer architecturally to Alexandria’s ancient history as a world capital, but also to the second era of greatness, that of the 19th century. Population has grown fivefold in the last fifty years, but multiplied by one thousand in the last two centuries. With the density and widespread expansion of the modern city, the history of ups and downs may today be reaching another period of great importance. With challenging political renewals of contacts between Middle Eastern, North African and European countries, the new megacity of Alexandria may again take on an internationally leading role.

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THE CHALLENGE OF URBAN GROWTH

Adel Elsawy, Lecturer, Department of Architecture, Alexandria University

What is your main reflection after this New Urban Topologies seminar day?

My reflection is that we can see the same problems in most of the Arab countries, like Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt, and that these problems are severe. They concern the challenge of urban growth, architectural preservation, the question of slum areas and the means of financing investments to provide quality of life in the cities.

Learning about the experiences from Amman and Beirut, did you get new thoughts on how to deal with the challenges of Alexandria?

Yes, I got some new ideas from Lebanon and the company Solidere that rebuilt the city center. I am also impressed by the work of the Amman Institute. Procedures of planning and their implementation are very good practices to know.

What is the main challenge for Alexandria right now?

Alexandria has hope in the future. We will do an actual strategic plan—a right one—and implement it. Today there are many studies done for the city but we cannot implement anything.

Why can’t you implement them?

For three reasons. The first is for political reasons. The second for personal reasons; some people do not want certain things. And the third reason is that no one can control urban planning in the city. I hope I can get funding for building capacity for the engineering authorities to do studies on how to control urban planning in the city. Right now the situation in Alexandria is a very difficult one.
CHAPTER 2
Dialogue
Demands
CONTRIBUTING ESSAY

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING IN THE EGYPTIAN CONTEXT

Zeinab Nour-Eddine Tag-Eldeen, PhD Candidate, Urban Planner, Architectural School of the Built Environment, the Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm

The rapid urbanization of Egyptian cities has given rise to the urgent need for new planning methods to cope with the complex process of urban development and improve collaboration between the various actors that have a stake in city development. Egypt’s planning institutions realize that the production of master plans that apply the traditional top-down planning approach lack a realistic vision that is confirmed when they are confronted with urban realities. Therefore, collaborative and participatory planning methods that involve the real actors in the planning and implementation processes of the development have become the subject of a core debate among official planners as they attempt to improve Egypt’s planning thinking to meet the reality of the urban environment. I had the opportunity to play a modest role in these ongoing efforts made by the General Organization of Physical Planning (GOPP) through working as an urban planning consultant in a project funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) and managed by SIPU International with the purpose of supporting the GOPP with advanced urban planning technical knowledge. During this work as a practitioner, I undertook a demonstration project where new ideas of collaborative and participative planning processes were examined in an Egyptian reality, in Zifta City. As a researcher at Sweden’s Royal Institute of Technology in the Regional and Urban Studies Department of the Architectural School of the Built Environment, I have a great interest in the cross-cultural transfer of planning knowledge. In my doctoral research I examined the transfer of planning from one context to another with a special focus on the role of planning and its associated values in determining which path of change a society may take. In my view, the Egyptian context, which is defined as the institutional structure of the society and its cultural values, becomes a central element of debate in the transfer of collaborative planning to Egypt. By identifying the collaborative possibilities that have been formulated from the people’s shared values and including those inherited from society’s shared history, I have endeavored to recontextualize the Western collaborative planning model in a way that makes it more appropriate to Egypt. This “localizing” of the collaborative planning model forms the subject matter of my thesis, Cross-Cultural Transfer of Knowledge: Collaborative Planning in the Egyptian Context, to be published in October 2012, and which is summarized below.

Planning values influence the direction of change in a society

Planning has lent legitimacy to the development of society through the application of different theories and practices. With its embodied concepts and values, different ways of planning influence the direction of change that a society may achieve. Therefore, when planning models transfer across national borders, planning plays a significant role in universalizing its associated values despite differences in institutional structure, histories, contexts and cultures. With the development of Western modernity, planning ideas became associated with rational values grounded on scientific truths driven by the impact of new technologies that lead progress in the West. This was accompanied by corresponding changes at the society level achieved through the means of rational planning, where society was objectified and manipulated in line with prevailing technical beliefs and which widely dominated the fifties and sixties. However, by the late 1970s, the rational planning model lost ground to a wave of emerging radical approaches as planning theorists drew their thoughts from post-modern philosophers and social scientists to develop various planning theories to address various aspects of new challenges in society e.g. diversity, multiculturalism, racial and gender differences.

Despite the plurality of planning theory that has evolved in the last five decades, planning knowledge remains relatively rooted in the same geo-cultural locations of Europe and the USA, and has transmitted its associated values to the rest of the world. This spread of apparent universal values imposes, or endeavors to impose, a social order that serves these values with complete disregard for the differences in history, culture and context. For instance, whereas the European experience in planning demonstrates that planning is built up through a mixture of scientific knowledge and academic development to meet the continuous challenges posed by the change in society, the Egyptian planning experience, as in many developing countries, has been driven by the centralized influences and purposes of colonialism, independence, and post colonialism rather than being driven by purposes and values that feature within Egyptian society. The central idea that has been dominating planning practices in Egypt is to plan for development along the same path of progress and modernization as that of the developed world. By associating planning with vocabularies...
derived from concepts of what is "modern", "industrial" or "developed", planning has played a central role in making changes in Egyptian society that disregard its social, economic and institutional contexts. The current urbanization challenges that face Egyptian cities demonstrate that planning thinking that had the objective of modernizing Egyptian cities in absolute ignorance of context, has seriously failed to match the urban reality of Egyptian society.

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING PUT INTO PRACTICE — AN EGYPTIAN DEMONSTRATION CASE

In view of the failure of the imposed model, the transfer of planning knowledge to a new context must be opened to disciplines and put into practice, subject to a dialogue with the people of that new context. Collaborative planning was put into practice within Zifta City, Egypt, as a demonstration project; where the planning process emphasized the participation of local stakeholders, the establishment of a dialogue between the formal and informal actors, the collaboration between different governmental departments, and thereby turning the plan from a product to a progressive process that reflects the urban reality of the city. The lessons learned and extracted from the Zifta demonstration project fed into the overall objective of supporting the GOPP in developing a planning model for use in city and village planning throughout Egypt. As a researcher, I revisited the theoretical strands of thought on which the collaborative planning model is grounded, namely Habermas’ communication theory, Giddens’ structuration theory and the institutionalist approach in order to arrive at a new interpretation of collaborative planning with reference to the Egyptian context. The practice of collaborative planning in Zifta drew attention to the collaborative values within Zifta society, which have a strong blend of socio-cultural and religious influences rooted in its history. These values shape the character of the society’s interrelationships and guide the function of its formal and informal institutional structures. The incorporation of these values, during the practice of collaborative planning, improved the participatory performance of those active in the project and resulted in the proposition of socio-economic development that both utilized and enhanced the intrinsic social values. Planning collaboration in Zifta provided situational definition of what planning is for; by identifying that planning in Zifta should be asset-based, self-dependent, with efficient use of local resources, and allowing for local initiatives. The interaction process with people sharing values increased the awareness of the people about their shared socio-economic and cultural assets, which was reflected in their increased self-confidence, a shifting of the
The collaborative ideas that characterize the society, identified during the Zifta demonstration plan, motivated me, as a researcher, to further investigate Egyptian society from the perspectives of Egyptian thinkers and philosophers, which helped me to arrive at a new interpretation of collaborative planning that was appropriate to the Egyptian context. I observed that despite the intellectual input over time of Egyptian thinkers, they have never been given an opportunity to contribute to the evolution of planning or any other scientific disciplines in Egypt. Notwithstanding that post the Enlightenment, Egyptian philosophers such as R. Tahtawi (1801-1873), and M. Abduh (1849-1905) made the first perception of modernity. Today, contemporary thinkers such as El Messiri, A. Hussein, and G. Amin are still engaged in the main question, which remains; how to modernize Egypt with the entire acknowledgement of its society's cultural, historical and institutional context? My investigation of Egyptian intellectual thought is the first attempt to incorporate the ideas of Egyptian philosophers in planning theory. My aim is to build a theoretical reference for contextual collaborative planning.

The thoughts articulated among the philosophers and thinkers are inspired by common principles and values with reference to the traditions, culture and the religious belief inherited from the history of the society. Principles of freedom, equality and mutual responsibility towards the society that are defined by the reciprocal mutual relation between the individual, family and society, have shared meaning among Egypt's Islamic and Coptic communities. These principles are reflected in people's stories of success from different periods of their common history. Shura, or consultation, as a means for public participation, is a popular initiative emphasized by Islam to ensure the legitimacy of decisions that is extended to the non-Muslim community. It is a participatory feature that provides guidelines to assess and address different opinions within society. It is a framework of governance based on popular consent and collective deliberation according to principles shared by society. Egyptian society, as a collective society, emphasizes the culture of relatedness, which refers to the culture of family and inter-personal relational patterns characterized by dependent-interdependent relations with overlapping personal boundaries that emphasize self-sacrifice and solidarity among individuals. The collective Egyptian society is able to reinforce the notion of group inclusion rather than exclusion. Thus, solving conflict in collaborative planning process is better done with reference to Egyptian social values as they operate on the notion that self-interest is subservient to society's interest. The communication patterns are influenced by society's cultural values, which play an interesting role in society's interaction routines. Therefore, understanding these patterns is important in building an effective communication process to guide collaborative planning.

A contextual collaborative planning model that is associated with the principles and values built locally and inherited from the history of the society will improve the performance of people's participation by enhancing the values of the society as a whole, build people's self-confidence and motivate them to trace a pathway for development that guides the change planned for the society so that it is balanced by local assets and is aligned with the context of the society.

**WHY COLLABORATIVE PLANNING?**
What strengthens the ability of the collaborative planning model to be transferred and practiced in a new context is its emphasis on contents and processes. It combines three elements: the “interaction” of people in places, the institutionalist’s view of the dynamics of social change, and an “interpretive” view of planning. Because it is not a rigidly prescribed planning model, it has the capacity to re-contextualize when it is transferred across cultures. From the perspective of planning scholars, the urban development experience indicates that the imbedded principles of master planning are inappropriate for bringing about the qualitative and quantitative improvements to urban environments. Furthermore, the governments of developing countries have encouraged people's participation, private sector, NGOs and community residents to play a stronger role in governance as useful means for promoting economic development and a fair sharing of economic growth.

Collaborative planning is defined as a process that shapes arenas where stakeholders can meet to work out what it means to build new collective ways of thinking and acting and to re-frame and re-structure their ways of proceeding. The collaborative planning model is built around several concepts: stakeholders and their rights and duties; learning by doing to create local knowledge and competence; rules of communication and the Habermasian ideas to build consensus; the understanding of social system and power structure and Gidden's theory, building capacity for institutional change; and the new role of planners. It is important to mention, that the collaborative model has been criticized for its idealism, its neglect of power relationships and its impracticality. Therefore, the attempt by my work to re-contextualize collaborative planning in a non-western context, such as Egypt, is a new opportunity for the model to challenge a different urban reality.
NEW ROLE OF EGYPTIAN PLANNERS
The collaborative planning definition provides a certain flexibility that enables it to be reshaped and re-contextualized, thus improving its capacity for transfer to a different context. But this mission requires a new role for Egyptian planners. In addition to the new requirement for planners to undertake collaborative planning by involving all stakeholders in an interactive process, further efforts are required from the Egyptian planners, practitioners and academics, supported by the formal planning organizations to institutionalize an Egyptian contextual collaborative planning approach and mechanism. Planners should become an integral part of the evolution of planning culture in Egypt.

A country like Egypt with its huge urban problems should definitely re-direct its human resources and make use of the large number of planners graduating annually and finding difficulty in locating job opportunities. Greater attention should be paid to linking planning academia with the urban reality of Egypt. The influences from international development aid programs on the Egyptian planning policy should be reduced and replaced by greater collaboration between Egyptian urban planning universities and by maximizing the relevance of their academic research to serve the Egyptian urban reality. Therefore, it is recommended that a campaign at university level to provide education that is useful and relevant to the country be initiated. There is a need for the development of new planning curricula at the Egyptian universities ethically motivated towards interactive social planning that is rooted in the Egyptian context. The academic community of planning education should move away from the use of traditional planning methods and tools to a more reflective-practice planning approach to make it relevant and useful in Egyptian urban conditions.

Besides the understanding of the international experience of planning trends, the Egyptian planning education should also draw upon the intellectual discourse of Egyptian thinkers as an essential source of information about the relation of the Egyptian individual with society and the root issues governing its socio-economical and political conditions. Thereby, planning thinking that is relevant to the development of Egyptian society will be developed. Such understanding will contribute to the development of a planning knowledge that is locally embedded and characterized by both similarities with advanced knowledge as it is understood internationally but adapted to the particularities of the Egyptian context. Educating planners, who can practice planning in the Egyptian realities and articulate this with an assembly of planning theory that is socially, culturally and politically relevant to the country’s conditions will contribute to a better solution to the urbanization problems of Egyptian cities.

INTERVIEW
MY FAITH IN CREATIVITY
Hebattallah Abouelfadl, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, Department of Architecture, Alexandria University

What are the central questions at this New Urban Topologies program in Alexandria according to you?
Dialogue and communication are the main issues. This can be communication between different administrations, organizations and even between people within the same organization. Another important matter is the way society looks at the inhabitants living in informal housing areas. The concept has been to look at these people as slum dwellers who have to be moved from one place to another. We should stop this strategy as quickly as possible. Nobody wants to live in a slum. Building trust between those people and the government is a big issue.

What are your thoughts regarding collaborative planning in the Egyptian context?
Participation is quite new for Egypt. Until now there has been no real participation. We might gather people to listen to their needs regarding city planning issues. But the official representatives of people are not elected in the right way, and they do not consider their real needs. Awareness is a major challenge. There is no under-
standing of the problems, not even among educated people. Few of
the professors in the universities even know what strategic urban
planning is.

How can we change this situation?

Since yesterday, an incident on our trip has been on my mind.
When we were moving through the city we got stuck with our huge
tourist bus inside a market. Although I am a resident of Alexandria I
thought to myself: how can we get out? But when I now think of how
quickly the situation was solved and how people around the bus
managed this stressful situation—this says a lot about Alexandria. It
shows that the problems we have here are too big for the government
to manage and that people themselves can be a part of the solution.
When people are allowed to help themselves they will feel proud and
connected to their city.

How can confidence within people be of use in the urban planning
processes?

People are creative and they have energy. So the question is how we
as planners can be of help to them and to talk about things that are
not directly connected only to their own buildings. Soon there will be
an election here in Egypt and for me the big question is how to create
this bridge between this spirit among the people and those in power.

What is needed to build this mental bridge?

One important issue is to create public spaces where everyone can
integrate and exchange ideas. These should be spaces where no person
is superior to the other. We need to be able to have different categories
of people together in one space. This is how urban planners should
think for the future.

Are there any such places in Alexandria for the moment?

No, but in Cairo it has started. For example one square has now
been turned into a public art area. People are performing there and
you can find people from every part of society at this site.

Why is this not happening in Alexandria?

I am not sure. For some reason Alexandrians are not open to art in
general. The project has been very successful in Cairo.

What is the mentality of people here?

I am from Alexandria, but suddenly I don’t know. I had never
thought that there are so many of the Salafists or the Brotherhood
here. The revolution revealed their numbers and in Alexandria
specifically, because they have a hub here.

What is the difference before and after the revolution, can you see
the change in the streets?

You can see it quite obviously. It is like when you open something
that you should not have opened. Everything comes out, good or bad. I see it as a steam pot, you open the lid and steam comes at you with rage. It will take a lot of time, perhaps a year or so to calm down. Right now everybody wants to speak up. A lot of religious parties that have been forbidden to do certain things during the old regime are starting to do things in a way that is really not good.

So what are they doing that affects the city of Alexandria?

The religious parties are very organized and they are getting involved in elections and universities. This is what is happening. There are people who before were not allowed to take certain posts and who now, when things are changing, are taking all their chances.

What does this mean to the Department of Architecture where you work?

The problem is that we are still not trained for democracy; we are not trained to hear each other or respect the opinions of others especially if they are different. And when religion interferes it makes it quite difficult as religious parties rarely have space for different opinions or different interpretations and so you get stuck with either obeying God or disobeying Him, and so ending any discussion.

Talking about the street life in Alexandria, how has the revolution and the events that followed affected the way women can move in the public space?

Suddenly everybody is veiled. In the past few years, many Egyptians went to Saudi Arabia to work, as the situation here was tough. These people came back with stricter religious ideas that I believe are not in accordance with our Egyptian society. Our society used to be very open. Alexandria was a cosmopolitan city. We had Italians, Jews and Greeks, and they were all mingling together. You can see traces of this in the diversity of buildings.

How was the spirit in Alexandria when you grew up?

It was very unique and elegant, even more so than in Europe. I have seen the deterioration myself. But I believe that Alexandrians in general are fighters. It will not go smoothly: there will be rebellions. I am an optimistic person and I think that eventually things will be better.

What are the most important keys to reach a positive change?

Education! That children will learn how to use their brains. To develop people’s ability of critical thinking.

What do you think about the New Urban Topologies initiative?

I always like the idea of communicating with others and having somebody seeing you with an outside perspective. It makes such a difference. Because when you are inside and stressed about all the problems, you cannot see clearly. But when somebody comes from outside and either tells you whether you are doing fine or not, or gives you a suggestion about what could be changed, it gives you energy. It makes you see the broader picture.

But there must also be difficulties for the people coming from the outside trying to understand the urban fabric you have here.

Of course! It takes time to understand everything. Still, I find their contribution valuable but indirect. Let me give you an example. The Department of Architecture held a workshop in one informal district here in Alexandria with some German colleagues. We had the impression that Europeans know everything. But when they started to talk we realized that we know what we want and what we need. Their contribution should not be about answers. We know our problems much better because we live with them everyday. Therefore the combination of our knowledge and their questions is what is important.
CLEAR COMMUNICATION

A SOCIETY NEEDS COMMUNICATION. This notion was the starting-point for the New Urban Topologies group discussing participation and dialogue in Alexandria. They then identified the obstacles for successful communication to take place. The team stated that Egyptian society has a lack of freedom of speech and that this lack is visible in a number of ways.

They concluded that the elder are not communicating with the younger. They saw a gap between the people and the authority, where the people don’t know what the authorities are doing or discussing. The team members also identified a communication gap between genders as well as between social-economic stratas. Furthermore, they underlined the problem of insufficient education—today many people do not know how to improve their community and their city. Even given they are educated, the inhabitants do not have enough information about urban planning problems, planning regulations and the proposed strategies. The unawareness of regulations leads to disrespect of the law, as when residential houses are built without permission.

The team stated that the authorities are lacking in professional competence, as they do not have clear and realistic visions for the future. The authorities should be able to better inform people, through the media or in other ways.

But insufficient communication is not only the fault of the authorities, the group members concluded. All Egyptians need to be less negative about their life and more interested in the common interest. As for now, many people only take care of what is related to them, not public property and public spaces. In short, what people need more is a sense of belonging. If they care about their surroundings, Alexandria will become a better city.

One way to achieve this is to learn from the revolution and the social bonding and unification that happened in Tahrir Square and in other public spaces across the country. In Tahrir Square, there were cultural activities such as music and songs motivating people, as well as street art, graffiti, public debates, and poetry. There was also communication through technology with Facebook and Twitter. After the revolution people used cultural centers to debate and talk about what was happening and about the future.

Also, the workshop group saw a renewal of a traditional Egyptian concept of “Sheikh Al-Hara” where an old wise person takes care of a small area and solves the problems occurring in the space. This person is usually a man. The team stated that old traditions need to be updated: the inclusion of women is absolutely necessary in the future kinds of this caring community group.

The Egyptian participants concluded that the revolution gave them confidence. They now know how to distribute responsibilities, communicate within the neighborhoods and be focused.

A good solution for better dialogue in Alexandria would therefore be to begin at the neighborhood scale and provide community centers where different groups can interact and spread awareness. However, the team underlined that they no longer approve of staying in the spot the governor wants them. It is the neighborhood that must decide where and when to hold the debates and interact. Here, social media will play an important role.
MANAGING PUBLIC AWARENESS

Natheer Abu-Obeid, DEAN, PROFESSOR, College of Architecture and Design, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid

THE FACT THAT Alexandria is a seaport has provided a unique exposure to the world compared to other inner Egyptian cities. Alexandria’s cultural diversity presents a fertile environment for a cosmopolitan approach for future planning. The human and social capital of city inhabitants is an important potential for revitalization, especially in restructuring situations.

In our workshop we came to the conclusion that an urban development strategy that uses communication approaches can reveal people’s underlying attitudes and traditional wisdom. It also helps people to adapt their views and to acquire new knowledge and skills, as well as spread new social messages to large audiences. Increasing participation is an efficient tool for avoiding social exclusion.

Participatory processes need resources: time, organizational efforts, communication and clear commitment. The motivation to participate is higher when the issue at stake is concrete and directly affects the living environment of the participants. One of the major issues is how city administration can incorporate the ideas provided by an active civil society into administrative processes.

Our work group agreed on a two-phase work plan, one for problem diagnostics and another for responsive suggestions (solutions). These phases were formulated under the theme “The City Belongs to People”. As for the first phase “Problem Diagnostics”, the group discussion revealed different levels of lack of effective and/or transparent communication within and among all stakeholders in the community of Alexandria:

- Between the society and the authority: at this level we sensed the lack of freedom of expression by the society, and the lack of understanding by the authority, to the needs and aspirations of the city community. One clear manifestation of this was the strongly biased media for the interest of the authorities. This is in addition to the perception of society that there is a lack of law enforcement.

- Between the individual and the society: at this level, we sensed a lack of freedom of expression for the individual and a lack of individual sense of belonging to the society and lack of awareness and responsibility towards the interest of common people, the law, environmental issues and urban and city issues.

As for the second phase (responsive suggestions), we thought of learning lessons from two cases and bridging between them. The first case is contemporary, which is the communal communication and co-operation among people in the Egyptian revolution. In the revolution, people formed community groups to do the following: defend the security and safety of their neighborhoods, facilitate communication within society members, manage the maintenance of their parts of the city, manage demonstrations and strikes and carry out and manage cultural activities and events of social bonding. All this by utilizing various types of communication including social media, technological/electronic and artistic ones, such as music, street art, poetry and public debates. Within this context, there was a revival of the use of public spaces and cultural and community centers which had not been effectively used for a long time before the revolution. The second case to learn from is historic, and existed previously in the old Egyptian communal traditions, which is the concept of “Sheikh Al-Hara”. In the past, for each neighborhood there was a form of communal governance manifested by a community leader called the head of the neighborhood, or in Arabic “Sheikh Al-Hara”, who was usually a wise and trustworthy person in the community. This person was a facilitator to help people communicate and carry on their co-operative communal responsibilities. In our proposal, we conceptualized the community groups established within the revolution as a re-birth of the concept of “Sheikh Al-Hara”, but in a contemporary form appropriate to the Egyptian contemporary situation. Our proposal is based upon formulating what could be called “The Neighborhood Council”. This is an elected group of people whose main mission is to lead and manage the community in taking care of their own interest and the interest of their neighborhood in a flexible manner. This group is expected to include members representing different genders, generations, socio-economic and ethnic groups. Some of their objectives may include: maintaining their neighborhood,
utilizing their community centers in fighting illiteracy and poverty; leading and managing public awareness to the vital social, urban, economic, environmental and political issues of their society and the city, communication and collaboration with the official authority to achieve their goals and objectives, conducting cultural activities and utilizing all types of communication including social media, technological/electronic and artistic ones, such as music, street art, poetry and public debates to achieve their objectives. For example, a press linked to literacy programs, and audiovisual materials, can be highly effective channels for disseminating development information and for stimulating community action.

**INTERVIEW**

**WE THOUGHT WE COULD WAIT**

Dalia El Sayed, Urban Planner, Urban Planning Department, Alexandria Governorate

**What are your thoughts after attending the New Urban Topologies program here in Alexandria?**

Yesterday, when we went on the excursion around the city, I saw many places I had not seen before. I discovered that there are a lot of problems here in Alexandria like the slums and the informal settlements. There are also a lot of public spaces that are not well utilized and which we could deal with in a better way.

**What are your main tasks at the planning office?**

I work on the upcoming strategic plan of Alexandria. Among the tasks is the detailed strategic plan that includes zoning and infrastructure.

**Did this program give you any new ideas for your work?**

Of course, these past days have added a lot. I enjoyed the teamwork here and the exchange of thoughts. Now I need to discuss how to include this exchange of ideas with my managers.

**What will be the most important thing that you will tell your managers and colleagues?**

I see a lot of potential in the Mahmoudia Canal. I also think that we need to solve the problem with the informal settlements and the slums. I saw them on the excursion and it was hard to see how severe it was. We really need to solve this quickly.

**You do not discuss the informal settlements at your planning unit?**

We do, but I think we need to see if we can do something about them right now. We thought we could wait, but after seeing these areas and discussing them in the workshop I think we must shed more light on them.

**How was it having colleagues from Beirut, Amman, Stockholm, Istanbul and Damascus here analyzing Alexandria?**

I like the fact that people from different countries shared the solutions that they implemented in their respective cities. Most of the problems are similar to ours here, which means we can learn from their solutions and how they implemented them.

**What about collaboration with the Alexandrian organization, Gudran Association for Art and Development?**

The idea of Gudran is very new to me, I have never seen anything like it before. I do not know if we can use their ideas in the near future or distant future, but I am optimistic.
The Mahmoudia Canal.
INTERVIEW

LESSONS FOR BEIRUT

Bachir Moujaes, MANAGER, Urban Design Department, Solidere Urban Development Division, Beirut

What are your main thoughts after this New Urban Topologies seminar day?
I really like the structure of the seminar; it was a great melting-pot of people. Although we have different ideas and face different problems, there are also many similarities between our cities. When I listen to how the Swedish participants explain problems of Stockholm, the strategies are so clear. Targets, goals and achievements are identified. In our part of the world, we understand the problems but we lack a clear methodology, as well as appropriate and viable solutions.

What is the key in achieving this method?
We need to separate problems from each other. Today, we tend to mix up problems and therefore we are not able to see clearly what is reachable within our capacities. Whether intervention of the city is top-down or bottom-up, the projects need to be down to earth, and this is what we lack in Beirut. I am very impressed by the work of the Amman Institute and their appropriate balance of scale between a single building and very ambitious ideas for the whole city. We should really work on such methodologies which directly address, among other priorities, the neighborhood scale. For me, it is the key for appropriate urban solutions because of its intermediate scale which we can handle. Once we achieve this, we can properly address macro-scale issues such as social-economical transportation, etc.

What are your main reflections visiting Alexandria for the first time?
Alexandria is a city that looks a lot like Beirut and similar to many port cities around the Mediterranean Sea. It is worth looking at our common problems to tackle them in a non-generic way while preserving local identities. Common solutions will never solve problems that appear similar. Each district, each neighborhood, each street has its own characteristics, and therefore its own solutions.

What parallels do you see between Beirut and Alexandria?
Both cities have a lot in common when it comes to the urban fabric that stretches along the waterfront, in addition to the urban morphology, the city scale, the animation in the public realm and streets. They both have a lot of informality and no severe rules. When it comes to more serious challenges like informal settlements, our problems in Beirut may come from a different history. Of course, it is related to poverty, but also to wars and spatial segregation that are directly or indirectly related to different communities and religions. I have the impression that informal housing is much more prevalent here in Alexandria than in Beirut.

You are the manager of the Urban Design Department in Solidere. How would you describe your organization?
It is a private real estate company that was commissioned by the government in 1994 to rebuild and develop the city center of Beirut. Seventeen years later, phase one has been completed. It includes the reconstruction of infrastructure, restoration of retained buildings, new developments and rehabilitation of the public space, in addition to several real-estate developments. Now we are starting phase two of the project which is located on the new waterfront of the city.

What are your thoughts on the fact that a private company like Solidere is the only developer of the city center?
Solidere has been created to fill the gap of public authorities who were not able to handle a project of such magnitude. The challenge was to re-establish the role of the destroyed city center, but also to reposition Beirut as a main regional hub. It was probably the only way to move out quickly but surely from the state of war. The reconstruction of Beirut City Center goes beyond a postwar urban regeneration pro-
ject: the revival of the city center was a symbol for the whole country. Solidere was established to form a particular public-private partnership with the local authorities. All reconstruction works were paid, realized, implemented and maintained by Solidere, and today the entire public realm has been returned to the State.

What were the implications of this partnership?

The first phase included the full reconstruction of the infrastructure, roads and public spaces. Moreover, Solidere financed and executed the treatment of a huge environment hazard that was created by the landfill dump during the war, in addition to the construction of marine defense works and the creation of a pedestrian promenade along the new waterfront. After completion, all these works were handed back to the municipality. In exchange, Solidere was granted a certain amount of land worth the equivalent of the investment paid for these works for development on the old dump site. Therefore, no public funding was required to kick-off the reconstruction process.

Needless to say, you faced difficult challenges rebuilding the city. Still there have been critics regarding the lack of cultural spaces in Beirut. What are your comments on that?

It is a very appropriate question today, but we have to keep the history of the project in mind as well. If you compress the effective time of the project, it does not go beyond ten years. The rest was interrupted by periods of instability and wars. It is still a very young urban project. However, there is a substantial cultural program that will put forward the cultural vocation of Beirut, which had started to be implemented a couple of years ago. The competition of House of Arts and Cultures was organized by Solidere, the Ministry of Culture and the International Association of Architects. The Heritage Trail, which retraces the history of the city through a pedestrian walk, will be launched soon. Today, major cultural events are organized in temporary exhibition spaces. Also planned are the Beirut City History Museum, a congress center, and other major cultural facilities.

We have been talking a lot about public participation and transparency during the program here in Alexandria. How is this process affected by Solidere being a private actor with such an influence?

As mentioned before, Solidere has been working in a very particular situation in the country to compensate the lack of public presence. However, all approved master plans, construction permits and other public procedures within the city center go through public authorities. On top of that, the city center has specific regulations for the city center that are harder than the regulations applicable elsewhere in Beirut.
Does this mean that the public can give their opinion on the plans for the city center?

Unfortunately, public consultancy is not part of our customs. Lebanese citizens were never involved in any urban planning process. Today, when I saw how it happens in Sweden, for example, I am a bit jealous! I am aware that putting major decisions for a city in the hands of its own citizens is a very long process, but it has to start somewhere. For example, we engaged in a debate on several levels with universities about the city center project. The fact that we attend conferences and seminars with universities and other professionals is a starting point. But I would tend to say that we have a lot to learn from the Swedish methodology, which I consider a universal model to follow in terms of public participation.

What does this New Urban Topology meeting mean to you personally?

Having this kind of meeting was a premiere for us from Beirut. As professionals, even if we practice in the same city, we rarely meet. The first time I met Ninette Fadel Nasr from the City of Beirut was in Alexandria two days ago. We do not agree on many planning issues, but I am glad that we had a very constructive exchange on Beirut, but in Alexandria!

STATEMENT
OUTSIDE THE BOX

THE WORKSHOP WAS EXCELLENT. We were amazed at ourselves and at how we could develop the themes in such a short time. In Amman we face similar problems; which mean that we can bring the recommendations and the results back home. Grouping people on different topics made us concentrate on one issue, that we did not have to think about the whole city, which was good. We have not been exposed to urban tools that help us think outside the box. This diversity enriched the process. The workshop had a double effect: it was capacity building for locals and gave us all as well new ways to think about our cities. To have a case study live in your head is more effective than to read about general theories.

/Rawan I Attour, PRINCIPAL URBAN PLANNER, Amman Institute

STATEMENT
EMPOWERING INHABITANTS

THE NEW URBAN TOPOLOGIES seminar was an eye-opening experience to me, I got to understand where my city stands and what the problems are that we are facing in Amman compared to Alexandria, which offered new solutions and possibilities to how I can help my city. In Amman we have the same problems with transportation and traffic jams as Alexandria, we are working on making our streets more pedestrian friendly, and we too need to increase public spaces and green areas. The big difference is in people’s awareness and participation, we have been working on these issues for a while now in Amman. Today we have a network of support centers and community centers, many different campaigns that are mainly dependent on social networks as Facebook, Twitter and new websites. I think that one of the main things that must be dealt with here in Alexandria is the officials’ approach to the people. The inhabitants must get the chance to be involved in their own city since there is not enough money to start an immediate implementation. The most appropriate approach would be to get the people to work for themselves and their city by increasing awareness and their sense of belonging to the city, starting from the smallest generation upwards. A good idea is to divide the city into sectors and smaller divisions, creating manageable communities and support centers that would lead to empowering the people.

/Mai Awawdeh, MEDIA FOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OFFICER, Princess Basma Youth Resource Center, Amman
INTERVIEW

WHAT MUST BE DONE

Ninette Fadel Nasr, Architect, Planning and Urbanism Department, the City of Beirut

How is it working with colleagues from Sweden, Turkey, Jordan, Syria and Egypt?

It is very good. What we have here is a mix of cultures and knowledge. The conversation becomes richer in solutions and this changes us. Even if we come from different countries we have things in common. Especially within the Arab culture we share problems in our cities, and that lets us understand each other easily.

What similarities do you see between Beirut and Alexandria?

We have the same type of administration with a centralized system. The difference is in the degree of centralization. Here, the system is too centralized. The municipality does not have power. Instead the central government and its representatives are in charge here in Alexandria. In Beirut we also have a centralized system, but the municipality has a larger space for intervention.

What more parallels can you identify?

That would be the problems that are caused by our centralized systems. Municipalities in general are nearer people than the central government. The municipality knows the needs of the inhabitants, they know what is missing and the problems on site. When this in-
stance is absent, the decision comes from above going down without any participation from the people. That is a big drawback in the Arab world where participation is very weak.

What are your thoughts on public participation?

Everything in Lebanon and the countries in our region go from the top down. Especially official people take decisions without listening to people’s needs.

You have an official position, how do you work with this question?

I know what must be done, I accept more than others. I want to listen to the people. The evolution of urbanism is very slow, but something is happening now. There is a small revolution in Lebanon. I think a change would be possible, especially in Beirut where people are very open. We have opened the door more for the municipality, for listening to people. We do not invite people; we are not at this stage. The step is that we let the municipality express themselves about the area we are planning for, and that we listen to the propositions of the people who approach us. So it is better, but we cannot pass from one stage to another very quickly. Planning processes need a lot of time to progress.

What had you imagined before joining the New Urban Topologies program here in Alexandria?

I did not expect much. I thought: how can we do something in such a short time? Urbanism is too complex to solve so quickly. But what I found has surprised me. It was a brainstorm! Everybody put their ideas in the basket and it is very fruitful with people coming from everywhere and from different countries and cultures. We have a lot to talk about.

What concrete things should NUT result in?

In the administrative system in Beirut things are going slowly. The slow evolution is not only because of the decision makers but it is because of the weak competences of the municipalities too. I often ask myself: can we do things any faster? It is evident that we cannot resolve everything quickly concerning all the stakeholders. So my advice to Färgfabriken is: do at first an intervention in the administration, come to Beirut and ask the people responsible to contribute in the seminar. That means they will also expect to participate in the exchange of ideas. We need to find a way to involve the other administrators and officials of the public sector who work with the urban planning of the country. As for the question of participation, I do not want to say it is absent, but we are only at the beginning. Public participation in Beirut is minimal, not seen as important. NUT could give some ideas on this—get these decision makers to react.

INTERVIEW

AN ARCHITECTURAL REVOLUTION

Danielle Kebbon, INTERIOR AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT, Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, Beirut

What are your thoughts on this New Urban Topologies program here in Alexandria?

What was very interesting about this workshop was that everybody is coming from different cultures, different backgrounds and still it is so smooth between the people, everybody listens to each other even if we do not normally deal with other Arab countries. So it is very good that we can meet and see that we can easily work together.

Did this surprise you?

It did not, but it is so uncommon to work with other Arabs. Perhaps you would on a project, but never on the intellectual level.

Why is that?

Maybe in Scandinavia you are much more open to each other but it is not the same here, I do not know why.

So what comes out of this collaboration?

Actually, we have the same culture, we think the same way. You have this feeling that it is not the individual that counts most but the
clan, the group you belong to. In Sweden, it seems that the individual counts most and then you have the big scale, the government. But here it is different, you have small clans, you have groups. The social network is very important.

What about Alexandria, coming from Beirut, what do you see?

Well, first I see the sea, because we have the sea also, but then when you go into the city it is sad because it is much more... I feel that Beirut is not so bad in comparison. Even if Lebanon went through a war, and is still not a very stable country, I still feel that we generate ourselves. We know that our government does not work properly so people tend to find solutions for themselves, by themselves or in smaller communities. There is a lack of communication because the government has a lack of individuals, but the society is still working. I do not feel that this is the case in Alexandria. The level of education is higher in Beirut. We have much better schools and universities. I think this makes a huge difference for the city. Education makes you become aware of everything around you. You get a different attitude towards society. In Lebanon, if you would speak with people on the street, everybody can answer with some words in French or English, but here I doubt there would be communication between a tourist and someone selling fruits. It is a bigger gap. But it is not their fault—it is the system.

What similarities do you see between the two cities?

First you have the sea, the Corniche where the water is not clean, so we have the same problem with the environment. Aesthetically I don’t like the new buildings because there is no reference to the ancient or the classical. And there is no avant-garde either, no architecture. It is only a hybrid with elements from everything and I do not find it beautiful. I am sensitive to this and to the lack of greenery. But they have a very big potential with the canal that is not being used. Alexandria really could be a beautiful city.

So what do you think is needed in order to get there?

It is difficult because there is so much. And I think it has gone too far to return, which also worries me thinking of Beirut. What happened in Tahrir, a revolution, we need such an awakening process also for urban planning, landscaping and architecture as well.

What are your thoughts on the company Solidere building Beirut City Center after the war?

Actually my point of view on this has changed. I still believe that a company cannot own a city or the center of the city because it is a public space, but this is what happened in Beirut. So the concept of it is wrong. But they had the money, the power, the will and the political connections.

How would you describe the city center today?

It is proper, it is in harmony. There are squares and green spaces, and it is respected. Now this is on the positive side. The city center would never have been rebuilt if Solidere had not done it.

How do you feel about that? It is actually against what you believe is right.

The thing with Solidere is that they created a city center for people who have money. If you do not have money to buy expensive food you cannot sit in a restaurant. Before it used to be a popular space for everybody, so they changed its character.

What can Alexandria learn from this experience?

Maybe they should privatize a little bit more. They should give the responsibility to small companies because the government does not have the power and professionalism to do all the changes that need to be done in the city. The main issue is to make individuals feel a responsibility towards the society and towards the environment. You will only have awareness if you feel responsible.
CHAPTER 3

The Language of Space

CONTRIBUTING ESSAY
THE CONCEPT OF THE MICRO CITY

INTERVIEW
LIFE IS TOUGH

INTERVIEW
IN SEARCH OF A FIXED PLACE

WORKSHOP PRESENTATION
A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP

STREET ARTISTS

INTERVIEW
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THE FEMALE BREAKTHROUGH

STATEMENT
LAND FOR THE PUBLIC

INTERVIEW
DIVERSITY MAKES A RICH SOCIETY
Squares play an important role in a city’s life, as it is the main intersection point between the city and its inhabitants where they feel its spirit. Our Alexandria hosts many public spaces that formed and still form the main part of the essence of Alexandrian life and history, whether these spaces are squares, small or large gardens or the famous Corniche of Alexandria to even the smallest yard in front of a tiny house in the neighborhood Kom El-Dekka.

For the Egyptians, the 25th January revolution has come to fulfill a large part of the long-awaited dream of liberty and dignity. And the squares in Alexandria have played an important role in this drama. At the Qaed Ibrahim Mosque thousands of people gathered at the front garden before setting off around Alexandria. The Masr Station Square was an important point in gathering and setting off, as was Mansheya Square and Saad Zaghloul Square and many other Alexandrian squares. As there was Tahrir Square in Cairo, there were in Alexandria many small Tahrir Squares, where protesters and revolutionaries were spending their nights dreaming, discussing, preparing, or even cooking and singing. The concept of the micro city was in every square in Alexandria.

One year after the revolution, these public spaces returned like before; as spaces for people from various classes to interact, relax, etc. However, now they are also spaces for demonstrations against the slow achievement of the objectives of the revolution, or even for small demonstrations to raise the Egyptian daily standards of life.

I guess the future of public spaces in Alexandria will depend on the situation in Egypt during the next period. Even if they will be spots for demonstrations again, or return like before, social public spaces in Alexandria need to be revived, and this will be through new visions from local administration and Alexandrian urban planners and designers.

These days and these public spaces and squares will always be engraved in our minds and will remain unforgettable for every Alexandrian. We know that we are witnessing a period that is one of the most important in modern Egypt. And we know that we must emphasize the immortality in the relationship between the people and the city... to create societies with great national memory.

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Interview

Life is Tough

Ibrahim Muhammad al-Arabi, Market Salesman, Alexandria

Where do you come from and where do you live today?
I was born in Kabbari, the usual type of an Alexandrian lower-class area. Now I live in Agami in a flat on the ground floor of a building with my wife and our four daughters.

What do you do here? Is this your main profession?
Yes. I sell clothes on the street. I’ve been doing this for 28 years.

How do you feel about your situation?
Frankly speaking, I’m sick and tired of this life. I am serious. I am fed up. I am diabetic and I’m tired. I don’t make a lot of money. Maybe I make a little money today; or maybe I don’t sell anything at all, I never know.

What are your thoughts on your neighborhood? What do you like and dislike about it?
It is not a matter of dislike. I like Agami, but life is tough. I need...
70 or 80 pounds every day to feed my children. Some days I make 100 pounds, some days maybe 30, some days nothing at all.

Did the revolution change anything for you?
Yes, there is a difference. When I displayed my goods here on the street before the revolution, the police would come and take them away. Once they took my goods, I lost income of 15 or 20 days. Will any of my children understand why I can’t make money? When I go home, of course they ask for food and drink, what shall I tell them? Tell them I have no money? How come? Now, after the revolution, I can feed my children.

I understand that the situation is very difficult, but do you have a dream?
My dream is that my children will get a good education. I used to send my daughters to a private school, but it costs a lot of money so I took them out and put them in a government school. But I can’t afford those schools either. I wish I could take my wife and daughters and live somewhere else.

Ahmed Sayyed Morsi, Market Salesman, Alexandria

For how long have you been selling clothes on the street?
I have been doing this for 25 years. I did my military service and then I took up this job. I was employed but money was not enough. I have four children so the burden was quite heavy. Getting a job is also difficult.

How is your work situation today?
Our problem is that there is no fixed place to sell our goods. We are asking the governor to find places for us to stand. We want to pay taxes and get insurance. When someone is married and has no insurance it is a big problem. But if he can stand somewhere and pay taxes and so on, this is a good job. There is unemployment in the country.

Do you have any ideas on how business could improve in this street?
Personally, I want to see the shops coming back. A more developed system, not haphazard this time. A monthly rent like it used to be. Unfortunately, even before the revolution, the government didn’t do anything for us. These are our rights. They said so in the papers but officials are helpless. No officials want to do anything.

Did the revolution give you any new hopes?
It did. I’m sure things will be better. The country will be fine but maybe after two or three years, until we get some stability and we have a president and a prime minister. At the moment, it’s a mess!
HOW DO WE DEVELOP the public spaces of Alexandria and improve those that are not really used? The participants in the New Urban Topologies workshop concluded that the public spaces must be activated. Today the people of Alexandria do not know about all public spaces that actually exist in their city. In order to change this, the media, local communities, non-governmental organizations, the governorate, and the young generation should help give attention to the issue of inclusion and accessibility to public spaces and initiate cultural events at these sites. Public spaces must be open to all—also low-income groups, women and those who are disabled.

The first aspect the workshop team came to discuss was the way public spaces in the city are connected. The participants concluded that the connectivity between the northern and the southern part of the city is neglected, as the main roads in Alexandria are mainly parallel to the Corniche. As the north-south transport connections are insufficient, the inhabitants of Alexandria face difficulty in accessing public spaces moving in these directions.

The workshop group moreover concluded that the public spaces that do exist are seldom very well cared for, as for example the Shallalat Gardens. Today this park has a bad reputation and the government is not helping to maintain it although it has some monuments inside, according to the participants. The banks of the Mahmoudia Canal could also be a great public space, they stressed, but neither is this area well maintained.

The team members furthermore recognized that many spaces that are considered public actually have a semi-public or private character. Beaches and parks that back in the old days were open to all have now been turned into private clubs, charge entrance fees or are just open at certain limited times. Moreover, shops and street vendors occupy large parts of the squares and sidewalks, a trend that has increased since the revolution.

This notion sparked thoughts about the perception of the ownership of public space before and after the revolution. The team stated that Alexandrians did not perceive public spaces as their own before the revolution. But after the events in February 2011 the inhabitants feel an ownership, and feel more freedom to move around.
STREET ARTISTS

GUDRAN ASSOCIATION FOR Art and Development is a gathering of visual artists, writers, photographers, moviemakers, dramatists and musicians. Motivated by "the sense of the artist's social responsibility" they aim to abandon the traditional spaces of exhibiting and performance, activate their artistic practice in the street and have more contact with all categories of the society with an emphasis on marginalized communities.

In supporting the creative artistic practice among the city dwellers—in a way that does not endanger or threaten the unique characteristics of their communities—as well as giving the opportunity for artists to activate their sense of social responsibility, the members of Gudran want to participate in the process of social transformation in Egypt.

INTERVIEW
THE EL-MAX MODEL

Aliaa El Gready, ARTISTIC CONSULTANT, PROGRAM MANAGER, Gudran Association for Art and Development, Alexandria

In the year 2000, you and Sameh El Halawany decided to found Gudran Association for Art and Development. What sparked this idea?
Throughout history, artists have played an important role in societies. We realized that we did not have this role in our society. We were just making art to be hung on the walls and presented to other artists. But art can bring potentials of the society to the surface. We wanted to use art as a key to open closed doors, to open people's minds and change their lives.

What would you say is your core message?
That art is for everybody. Everyone can produce it as everyone can make music. If you visit the fishermen's village of El-Max, our first project, you will see that this is the result.

How was it working in El-Max in the beginning?
It was very difficult. The community was closed upon itself, but we were there daily for ten years, day and night. We wanted to make this huge area an example: working with the children, the women, the youth, even men in different fields. We worked with those in the craft of fishing, sewing and designing clothes, or even just spent time playing and talking. And after ten years, step-by-step, we moved forward.
**STATEMENT**

**A DEEPER VISION**

ONE OF THE MAIN challenges we face today is that people who were interested in cultural activities before the revolution are now interested in politics and activism. They told themselves that they did great things getting a big dictator like Mubarak to step down. They told themselves that there is nothing as important as that. The challenge for us is to widen this picture. You need culture and arts in order to get a deeper vision for the future.

/Ali Hussein Al-Adawy, CULTURAL ACTIVIST, LIBRARY MANAGER, Gudran Association for Art and Development, Alexandria

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**STATEMENT**

**OUR CULTURAL IDENTITY**

I BELIEVE THAT EVERYTHING in life is connected. Sometimes people concentrate more on small things, and of course it is important to work, feed your children and have a good life. But culture is also a part of our lives. If we want to develop Egypt it is important to look after our own cultural identity. This is the challenge. It will take generations to change people’s mind about this.

/Khaled Kaddal, MUSICIAN, VOLUNTEER MANAGER, Gudran Association for Art and Development, Alexandria

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**INTERVIEW**

**ON TOP OF THE LIST**

Abdelrehim Youssef, POET, ARTISTIC COORDINATOR, Gudran Association for Art and Development, Alexandria

How would you describe the situation for culture here in Alexandria?

For a long time Alexandria was known as the capital of culture in Egypt, but that was in the old days. In the middle of the 20th century you would find very important musical, artistic and literary groups here. But after the war of 1967 the government’s interest in culture faded. And after President Muhammad Anwar El Sadat came to power in 1970 he allowed the very extremist of the Islamists into the universities and the cultural institutions. Sadat did not like culture or intellectuals. So from the 1970s the government’s interest in culture was minimal. But the intellectuals themselves kept the line.

How did this affect the cultural community here?

Alexandria has been very well known for its visual arts, the city housed the avant-garde of the movement. But there was no interest from the government. When the library in Alexandria opened we all thought this would be a place for intellectuals and artists to work. But after a while we discovered that we had no place there.

What is cultural life like today in Alexandria?

There are few other places than the governmental institutions, which are called cultural palaces, where the artists and writers are very classical in their expression. This is my polite way to describe them. If you have another more modern voice, you have no place there.
Are there any counter-movements?
Yes, there are. Many of their initiators meet through the Atelier of Alexandria that was founded in 1935 for both visual artists and writers. In the 1990s these people created small artistic groups in the café’s. The result was what we call “the Generation of the 1990s” that was present in the whole of Egypt, but especially in Cairo and Alexandria. It was very different in poetry and music and of course in visual arts. It is from this movement that Aliaa El Gready and Sameh El Halawany came. They wanted to reach out to the society with their art, not only stay in their studios.

How come you wanted to get involved?
I am a poet and a teacher and I joined the cultural scene in 1999. I visited the village El-Max that Gudran was working in, and I became friends with Aliaa and Sameh at once. They asked me if I could teach the children English, because they had problems there in education, especially in English teaching. And I did.

What attracted you to Gudran?
Their work and the place they had chosen to work in fascinated me. That they were artists who had moved towards the society, wanting to do something different from the conventional way of behaving. Today there are four local managers who were only children when we started. Gudran has finished its work there and is giving it to the people to continue. I cannot say that they had a huge success because the place is still very poor. It needs more than the possibilities of Gudran. But they have art, and every Friday the children go to the community center we installed to draw and listen to stories. They call it The Library.

Is there a lack of public libraries in Alexandria?
Yes. There are no small neighborhood libraries. In fact we have only one public library. It is important, but only university students go there and most of its old books are moved to the new library. In my opinion, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina library is very closed with access limited to a few, it is not open for the people.

You have a library here in your cultural center El-Cabina.
Yes, this was part of our vision when we opened in August of 2010. We wanted to create a place for cultural activities and music. The first event was a concert with the band Station. But it was when we invited Sonallah Ibrahim, a very famous Egyptian novelist, that the place became famous for its cultural activities.

Have you had any contact or support from the Alexandria Governorate?
No, we do not expect support from them. They do not even have budgets for their own activities. So we are collaborating with other civil organizations, like Eskendrella for Culture and Arts and the Center of Alexandria Studies. We depend on private funds.

What are your challenges right now?
I think the challenge for culture in all of Egypt is that culture isn’t a priority for people. This is the main problem that faced us before. People want to eat and work and when we speak about art they think we are very rich people. The challenge is also that the government has the same thoughts about culture. The cultural field is last on the government’s list of priorities. The challenge is that society sees culture only as entertainment and not as part of their daily life.

How would you like to see Gudran evolve?
Having this place is a dream. Now we have a base and this is a very important step for Gudran. If we can manage the challenges and go through this transitional period to a stable democratic society I think Gudran will go far.
Interview: The Female Breakthrough

Mirhan Damir, MSC Student, Department of Architecture, Alexandria University

You are from Alexandria, were any of the sites we saw today new to you?

I actually hadn’t been in many of the informal settlements to which we went today. Seeing those was really beneficial, as I believe it is important to visit all parts of Alexandria and all kinds of different communities.

What are your thoughts after visiting those districts?

Alexandria was once a cosmopolitan city but it has been transformed. I am asking myself if the positive diversity of the past has turned into a dangerous problem of segregation. Today no one asks the people living in the informal settlements what they think about their own neighborhoods. The planners just tell them that we have a better place for you to live and you must go there because this is the plan of the government and you have to do exactly as it says. At some point I think people will start to question being removed from their houses just because others think that it is for their own good.

Then we come to the question of dialogue.

Yes, and this is why Gudran Association for Art and Development is such an important organization. They are not only communicating with the intellectuals but the main focus of Gudran is uneducated people with low incomes who want to start reflecting about the society but cannot find the way.

What insights do you have in the work of Gudran?

I took part in one workshop that was a co-operation between the Faculty of Fine Arts in Alexandria, Technische Universität Darmstadt and Gudran in 2007, and I can say that it was one of the most important experiences of my life. I understood that the easiest way to create connections between people is through art. We went to the fishermen’s village of El-Max where Gudran wanted to create a community center. At first, all the people in the village refused because they didn’t know who these people were. Maybe they came from the government that wanted to tear down all the buildings? I liked how Gudran’s founder and manager Sameh El Halawany acted in this situation. He ate with the people, he played with their children, he talked to the men; just as the women from Gudran went to the women’s houses to drink tea. The aim was to get to know them.

What is your conclusion after this experience?

The most important thing is getting to know the people and to learn about their problems. After that you can come up with solutions. You cannot just come and knock at their door and say: "hey, I have an idea and you have to obey me because I am from the government." No, you have to discuss together, become friends with the people in the neighborhood and earn their trust. Because even if these people did not get a good education they do know what trust is. And if they don’t have trust in you, no matter where you place them, it will not work out.

What is the situation for women in the public space here in Alexandria?

The revolution was a breakthrough, for both men and women. Holding a concert or gathering in a public space was usually forbidden before the revolution. The government also made sure that most public spaces were gardens that were only open at certain times. Boys went there but girls were a bit afraid, and I was one of them.

What made you frightened?

I was afraid because you would probably find boys there who would try to harass you. I almost got harassed once, after that I stopped going to the parks. This was the stereotypical situation of any public space in Egypt. If I would have walked with boys or with my friends I was fine. But walking alone or sitting eating a sandwich alone, that was not considered normal in Egypt.

What happened after the revolution?

Now the priority for the public spaces is us, the people. Also the mentality about girls sitting in a public space alone, I am not saying it is better—not yet—but it is improving and that is a good start.
STATEMENT

LAND FOR THE PUBLIC

WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH land for public use. This is a major obstacle for development here in Egypt. Public land is often owned by different organizations, like the Ministry of Agriculture, the Railway Authority, or the Ministry of Antiquities. Again and again we have a situation with the three fighting together. How can we develop the land when the ownership is not settled?

/Hebattallah Abouelfadl, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, Department of Architecture, Alexandria University

INTERVIEW

DIVERSITY MAKES A RICH SOCIETY

Nada Osman, FORMER CULTURAL DIRECTOR, Rawafed, Syria Trust for Development, Damascus

You work with culture and development in Syria. What is the most important lesson you have learnt?

It is that culture has the most incredible power to create connections and bridges between people—even in the most difficult or marginalized areas. Culture is the fastest and the most effective way to both connect people and to distinguish them. Simply put, social, economic and human development cannot take place without understanding and utilizing culture as a catalyst for growth and change in cities and communities.

Why is it important that people in cities meet?

In the end, what makes a country unique is its diversity. For people to truly understand their identity they have to look beyond the individual—they have to look at communities and cities around them and to be proud of the diversity of their country. A rich society is one which is inclusive, and that recognizes that its strength comes from the tapestry of traditions, beliefs and opinions of its people. So, when people in cities meet this will inevitably encourage mutual growth.

What have been your aims at Syria Trust?

Our priorities in Syria have been to make sure that culture is an important player in the country’s development. We did this initially by empowering and helping people turn generally isolated and one-off cultural projects into sustainable and thriving cultural institutions that are dealing with relevant and important issues in people’s everyday lives. We asked questions like: how can artists play a role in improving and helping communities progress? How can people utilize their culture (anything from handicrafts to historic sites near their homes, to fine arts) to improve their quality of life and to take civic action? What changes do we have to make to convince urban and development planners that culture cannot be overlooked as a vital element in their plans from this point forward?

It must be a difficult situation for you working in Syria right now?

Yes, it is challenging for a lot of reasons. Some are obvious, like security, funding and logistics, etc. but I think that it is very important for any organization or individual that is undertaking and encouraging authentic civic action and grassroots participation to continue their work. True civil society is working hard to define citizenship and identity today, and it is really important to highlight and integrate these values in any vision for the future (and to avoid the mistakes of the past.)

What do you think about this meeting here in Alexandria?

You know, what I especially like is this link between art and urban planning. Dealing with cultural planning, we know how interlinked these areas are. When I read about New Urban Topologies I felt that this was a great opportunity to bring art managers and urban planners
together. The multi-disciplinary approach is very important.

**What can it give?**

It gives a complementary view for both disciplines. I discussed it with some of the young students doing urban planning. I explained what we do as cultural planners, and they told me that they never consider these things when they design the plan for the city, but the cultural dimension of the city—as art centers, art hubs and open spaces for youth—adds amazing value for a master plan.

We have been visiting some industrial areas today. What are your thoughts after visiting these sites?

That if you have the will you can create a more colorful life. I can imagine those warehouses becoming art centers or places for young people to meet and express themselves without prejudice or fear. I am sure there are many creative people here who just need a little bit of space and support to achieve amazing things—not only for themselves, but also for their communities. I honestly believe that there is a reciprocal relationship between culture and cities and that a city that nurtures, protects and promotes its culture will find that culture in return will yield incredible economic, social and human gains for its residents.

**What do you know about the cultural institutions here in Alexandria?**

I have not seen any. The Library is not a creative hub; it is more an academic center for knowledge. We have seen some initiatives from young artists, which is great. However what we try to stress in our work is that we need to take these individual endeavors to the next level by encouraging them to work directly with communities and other artists, and to elevate their role to leaders in the city’s development and progress.

Editor’s note: This interview was conducted in Alexandria in October 2011; since then Nada Osman has left Syria and joined her family in Riyadh. “Deciding to leave Syria was difficult, but it was the best choice for our family”, she concluded in an email in May 2012.
CHAPTER 4

At the Crossroads

STATEMENT
A MINDLESS IDEA

WORKSHOP PRESENTATION
THINKING TRANSPORT

INTERVIEW
KEEP THE PULSE

STATEMENT
THE VALUE OF NAMING

CONTRIBUTING ESSAY
DIRECTING THE INFRASTRUCTURE

INTERVIEW
A GREAT OBSTACLE

CONTRIBUTING ESSAY
PEDESTRIAN POLICY

INTERVIEW
RECLAIM THE WATERFRONT

STATEMENT
FOR SQUARE ENCOUNTERS
STATEMENT
A MINDLESS IDEA

CAN ANYONE TELL ME: how does one get the idea of separating a city from the sea with a highway? When those in power decided to place the highway along the Corniche they did not ask us. Instead they destroyed the beaches, they destroyed the old cabins. To build a highway is to encourage cars to go faster not caring about the people who wish to go to the sea.

/ SALAH HAREEDY, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, Architecture Department, Alexandria University

WORKSHOP PRESENTATION
THINKING TRANSPORT

IF YOU LOOK ALONG the seaside you will find a problematic situation, similar to what can be found all over Alexandria. This conclusion was the starting point for the New Urban Topologies participants focusing on transport and public utilities as they decided to use the Qaitbey area near the Corniche to shed light on the matter. The workshop team stated that today Alexandria is very crowded, with traffic jams and poor public transport. The case study district was chosen for its socio-economic diversity, social activity and strong local identity with residents that were perceived to have the mental ability to accept changes. A pilot project in this district could then help spread the new ideas to the rest of the city.

The group envisioned how the area would undergo a transformation where pedestrian streets, an involvement of artists shaping the look of the streets and the means of transport, bicycle paths, and green sitting areas were some of the components. Some of the pedestrian streets might be available to cars during the weeks but only open to pedestrians in the weekends. In those streets cultural festivals could take place, preferably focused on alternative means of transport that could raise the awareness of people.

Safeya Zaghloul is a wide and very active street with a lot of shops, cinemas and a lively street life. This would be one of those perfect to transform into a pedestrian street, the group concluded. The area around the Abu el Tanks by the courthouse forces the traffic to take another route than the Coriche.
INTERVIEW
KEEP THE PULSE

Niklas Svensson, CITY PLANNING STRATEGIST,
Stockholm City Planning Office

What is your impression of Alexandria?

I would say it is a rough diamond with very good potential. It seems to be a city with confidence in the future. The city has the long coast, which means that big parts of it have direct connections to the sea. It is quite dense, well connected and it has a great history. Many people around the world know of Alexandria and want to go there. If the city can cope with the social differences I think it has a lot of possibilities.

Explain, what do you mean?

I think the most important thing is that the planners here change their mind-set in how they look at their own inhabitants. Information is the first level in a dialogue process. In Stockholm we have recently launched an extensive program on dialogue with the inhabitants and I think the City of Alexandria could benefit from doing the same.

What lessons have you learned in your work that you want to share with your colleagues here in Alexandria?

It is important to have in mind that we, the planners, might not see what is best for people. We can have ideas on how to change people's movements and envisage how they will interact. But will people use our new connections? Will there be less segregation between districts or not? To create a viable solution you have to ask people where they move and how they want to move. Then you are able to find the right strategy.

So architects and planners cannot trust their education in knowing what is the best solution?

Let me give you an example. Sometimes I hear architects saying “you don’t go to the doctor and tell him what treatment you want, so why should we ask people for the solutions for the city?” I really believe this is the wrong approach. The doctor is listening to you, if he didn’t he couldn’t give you any cure. Imagine a patient coming to a doctor who says: “please be quiet!”. In my opinion, architects and planners must listen to people and then transform what they hear using their knowledge.

Abbas el Mursi Mosque, the biggest mosque in Alexandria, was pinpointed as another very active area that could be closed off for cars in weekends.

Moreover, some streets, like Sidi Nasr Eddine, could be cut off to give the many street vendors a legal and safe place to sell their goods in as they have lived under the threat of being chased away by the police for a long time.

The subsequent discussion and sketches presenting an alternative spatial proposal underlined the need for better education and awareness regarding the transportation system. As an example, the team members concluded that the underground parking in Alexandria is under-used while the streets are very crowded.

The group furthermore suggested having more traffic lights at the Corniche and pedestrian crossings—traffic separation with pedestrian bridges over the roads was considered to destroy the beauty of the city. Moreover, the team doubted that people would use such bridges.

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One of the New Urban Topologies participants went out during the workshop to ask taxi drivers for advice. They suggested an improvement of the traffic light system and investments in the public transportation system that would ease the traffic in the streets; either an aerial cableway or an underground railway.
Except from the matter of dialogue, what other critical points do you see?

The planners here in Alexandria are also discussing how to attract tourists. In my opinion this is the wrong way to start. If you get satisfied and happy citizens, the rest will come. It is not the tourists that will solve the situation. The planners and politicians should forget about tourists for now and try to get the people of Alexandria satisfied. If people are proud of their city Alexandria is going to be a very good tourist city I am sure.

What are your thoughts on the traffic and public transport situation here in Alexandria?

Alexandria already has the life, the pulse, and the shared spaces that European cities lack and want. I believe the important thing is to avoid the European strategy with traffic separation implemented without a dialogue with the inhabitants. Don’t copy Europe—ask people what they want and what they miss, what their problems and fears are. There are a lot of traffic planning theories, but the first step must be to listen to the needs of the people. After this process, it is time to look for good ideas.

What can Stockholm learn from Alexandria?

We can learn a lot, and I think the most important thing is to be braver. To put a large modern library by the water in a historical sensitive area would be impossible in Stockholm. Now Alexandria has this fantastic building that is really out of the ordinary. They must have started with the idea that they wanted something, whilst we in Stockholm always begin with the problems. In Stockholm the ones defending historic values see architecture and planning as a threat. And the planners see the advocates of the historic values as obstacles. We have a polarization in Stockholm I wish we could give up on. In Alexandria history is a part of daily life and therefore also a part of the planning.

STATEMENT
THE VALUE OF NAMING

WHAT JUST HAPPENED here in Alexandria is very new and original. We had a collection of Arabs and Europeans from different countries and that meant that we opened up new topics with new partners. It gave us an opportunity to exchange experiences and viewpoints. One example is my meeting and following discussions with Tahani Abou Emera who is the director of the Urban Planning Department.

In Alexandria, there are a lot of streets without names and relations to the site. I asked her: “Why is this? People need streets with names.” After this conversation, she decided to initiate a project to give names to all the streets in their new housing projects. For this, I am very happy. Within Gudran there are many writers and poets who are now invited to give names to the streets that have meaning and history. If you give a name to a street, that street becomes more important, almost more respectable. Without a name, you are nothing!

/Sameh El Halawany, ARTIST, GENERAL MANAGER, Gudran Association for Art and Development, Alexandria
THE FIRST TIME I visited Alexandria I felt that the city, although a coastal city, was turning its back to the sea in terms of interaction and provision of adequate public waterfront spaces to accommodate its citizens’ activities. The second time it was even worse: interaction with the sea was absent except for minor fishing activities, and controlled spaces—either expensive or not suitable for the citizens—it reduced their interaction with the waterfront.

The city suffers from a fast and uncontrolled growth that is resulting in many informal districts—structures with high densities and poverty that exacerbate the urban life at a rate faster than the authorities’ efforts for improving it. The informal high-density areas not only suffer from lack of amenities and public services, but also suffer from social exclusion and marginalization.

The distribution of social facilities and infrastructure services is not related to population density and distribution and are mainly concentrated in the front section of the city. Transportation and road networks concentrate on the linear movement between the eastern and western parts of the city and lack adequate connections running from north to south resulting in disconnection for the southern informal settlements, and encouraging formal linear growth of the city further east.

New disconnected developments, either residential or touristic are emerging in the southern outskirts of the city, creating islands of exclusion with a demand for infrastructure investment which is mostly prioritized over upgrading the existing infrastructure and basic life needs and services for formal and informal settlements, causing more deterioration. In order to avoid that, governmental investments in infrastructure services should be directed for eminent projects for the public rather than servicing the private investments.

Through engaging the communities, grass roots organizations and the various stakeholders of the city in the urban upgrading and planning process, the planning authority of Alexandria can integrate their efforts and support and utilize their different initiatives and actions directed at improving living standards, services and public life for the future plans for the city to improve civic life.
A GREAT OBSTACLE

Nuran Zeren Gülersoy, Professor, Director, Urban and Environmental Research Center, Istanbul Technical University

What is on your mind after these days in Alexandria?

The traffic here is terrible. I believe that the main problems in Alexandria are the traffic situation and the lack of affordable housing. But having rich and poor separated in the city is common all over the world, even though the separation is often more visible in developing countries. So the segregation is nothing unique to Alexandria or Egypt.

How do you meet those challenges in Istanbul?

In the last twenty years, we have achieved a lot in solving our housing and transportation problems. Now a new metro system is being built. And just like Egypt, Turkey has a lot of historic sites. We are working to conserve these parallel to the modernization and expansion of the urban areas.

What were your thoughts after the presentation by the Urban Planning Department of the Alexandria Governorate?

I don't think they have a proper plan, and that is the main problem. They need a strategic plan, a plan for transportation, another for housing. But at the moment they are in a difficult political situation. And this is what first has to be solved.

What about the presentations from Stockholm?

In Stockholm they seem to be able to implement their plans, and that is a crucial part. In Turkey, as well as I believe in Egypt, we are planning, but sometimes not implementing due to the political situation and the economic pressures. This is a great obstacle.
Besides making more use of the Corniche, one could also take advantage of the water. For instance, “water taxis” could transport inhabitants and tourists to important places along the coastline. Alexandria is a city with a lot of interesting sites, and it is important to make it easier to reach them.

Another problem that we discussed was that about citizens and developers alike who build apartment buildings on public spaces without any permission. These houses are mainly in the low-income areas of the city. This makes it impossible to fully implement the detailed plans for these districts and find sufficient land for schools and other public buildings.

Many participants were interested in how the public system is designed in Sweden. We discussed the different decision making levels in Stockholm—the national, regional and local—how they co-operate and what different actors do and what authority they have. Furthermore, we talked about the co-operation between different stakeholders in the Stockholm region when designing the regional plan, which aims at having them feel that the plan concerns them, that they agree with its vision and long-term goals. We also discussed the transparency within the public sector. One such example is that in Sweden the citizens are able to read and see all public papers.

The days in Alexandria were very interesting and intense. I believe that the New Urban Topologies meeting was a great way to start new co-operation and to learn from each other.

INTERVIEW
RECLAIM THE WATERFRONT

Christine Mady, INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNER, ARCHITECT, PHD STUDENT, Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts, Beirut

After three days in Alexandria, what is on your mind right now?
I find the city to be very interesting, deeply rooted in history and culture, and with a lively population that need more opportunities to take place in their city and have collective activities.

What challenges are most urgent, in your opinion?
Transportation and pedestrian mobility are very important challenges as well as job opportunities and capacity building for people without much school education. And the city should reclaim the waterfront.

Visiting Alexandria, what did you find inspiring?
The Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the 24-hour life of the city, the historical buildings and urban fabric and its diversity across the city.

What similarities can you see comparing Beirut to Alexandria?
The need to emphasize the coastal area as a public area is similar. So is the need to reuse industrial districts for the public benefit. There
is also a similarity in the horrible traffic situation and lack of pedestrian safety.

**And what is different?**
The scale of the city is different, the nightlife is different and the extent of preserved historical buildings is different.

**What knowledge and experiences from your own city did you find valuable to share with the other participants?**
I found the knowledge on using the waterfront and possibilities for activating public spaces valuable in the discussions with others.

**What are your thoughts on the New Urban Topologies project?**
This is a very interesting approach to reading cities. The combination of people from different professional and cultural backgrounds is also very enriching. I look forward to further group work, brainstorming and collaboration in this and other cities of the NUT project.

**STATEMENT**

**FOR SQUARE ENCOUNTERS**

HERE IN ALEXANDRIA there is no space where we can walk or ride a bicycle. We need sidewalks, bicycle paths, green spaces, squares and plazas. I want to be a good architect so that I can provide well-planned places where people can meet.

/Mohamed Dawood, STUDENT, Architecture Department, University of Alexandria
CHAPTER 5

Industrial Reuse

WORKSHOP PRESENTATION
CASE STUDY: THE COTTON DISTRICT

INTERVIEW
MODERNIZE AND PRESERVE

INTERVIEW
IT IS ABOUT ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

STATEMENT
THREATS AND PROSPECTS

INTERVIEW
EVERYBODY IS ASLEEP
CLOSE TO THE SEAPORT is Alexandria’s old cotton district. It is called Minet El-Bassal and was once a lively industrial area. Today there are some industries still in use, but many buildings stand empty. The district also hosts a large Friday market for used goods, Souk El-Gomaa. During the New Urban Topologies workshop one of the teams focused on this area specifically. As a starting point, the participants decided to pinpoint the problematic and the positive aspects of the area. They figured that only by knowing the problems and highlighting the positive values could they come up with solutions.

On the problematic side the participants saw buildings in decay, left to deteriorate without any maintenance. They saw an absence of life, a lack of greenery and public spaces, a lack of infrastructure as streetlights, and a deep lack of trust in the society among the residents.

On the positive side the team mentioned the location, with closeness to the Mahmoudia Canal and the seaport, the beauty of the old warehouses, and the spirit of the local residential and business community.

The workshop team recommended a preservation of the identity of the district. The area should be developed step by step with the people who live and work there in mind. The historical urban fabric must be protected; having the warehouses deteriorating is a great loss, the participants stated. No local inhabitants should be relocated in the transformation. Instead, their strong social identity must be acknowledged and the existing conflicts with the owners of the buildings solved.

With the devise “They Own the Buildings—but We Own the Streets” the team members wanted to develop the district while keeping its cultural and historical heritage. One key to this is that all Alexandria should be given knowledge about the area. Presently Souk El-Gomaa is located on three streets in the district. The team suggested promoting and expanding this market in order to get more people to visit the area and get to know its potentials. One suggestion was to invite all Alexandrians to come and sell their goods in a market festival.

After the word has been spread, the next step would be to collaborate with the people living in the area in identifying how it should be developed. In doing this, mutual trust can arise between urban planners, activists and the local residents. Only then can the right visions be implemented for the purposes that the local inhabitants have identified.
What do you think of El-Cabina?
In my opinion it would be very good if we had more cultural activities here in Alexandria. I like Gudran as they seem to make those things happen. The cultural movement in Alexandria is poor compared to Cairo—despite the fact that Alexandria was the center of culture in the past. We want to restore this situation and become the center of culture in Egypt and in the Middle East again.

What responsibility does the city have for the lack of cultural centers in Alexandria?
I think the governorate as well as civil society can help in the restoration of Alexandria as a cultural center. The governorate should encourage construction of new cultural centers, especially in the areas of the middle class, and support those centers. And civil society must create new cultural movements such as Gudran and interact with people, especially with the lower classes.

How can the governorate support these civil initiatives?
We do not have money to fund cultural activities. We do not have a lot of money at all. But really, it is not about money because Cairo has a vivid art scene even though Egypt doesn’t have a lot of money. It is the people there in the cultural field that make it work.

Why is the situation different in Alexandria?
People must be encouraged to meet and do things within a local cultural framework. At the moment, the money of the city goes into developing slum areas. This is our main challenge and where the money is put right now.

INTERVIEW
MARKET SUCCESS

Raghda Butros, FOUNDER, Hamzet Wasel, Amman

What are your thoughts visiting Minet El-Bassal?
I like to discuss with local people and really understand the community’s reality. I just talked to a shop owner about the cotton industry and why it has come to a halt in this area. He explained that while the farmers still grow the cotton, the big companies have the monopoly over purchasing, which means they pay a higher price, making the small industries unviable, which lead to them closing down over the years.
Do you see any new potential for this area? Or do you think it should remain as an industrial district?

I would have liked to talk to more people, so I could formulate some ideas. For me it is a question of engaging with the community, engaging with the people that work and live here, and finding out what you can do with the opportunities that exist within the community and then build something around that. A future development could be related to tourism, maybe a combination of local tourism and tourism from abroad. I am interested in developing something that would keep the spirit of the area, but at the same time help these residents to improve their lives.

What is important to have in mind before developing this kind of area?

We tend to look at areas we want to develop and forget that they already serve a function. This place is a successful market, so let’s make it an even more successful market. Once people from outside start to come and sell their goods, the place will start to develop organically. Of course we have the owners of the buildings that are waiting for the value of the land to rise so that they can sell the buildings or knock them down in order to build towers. But if they would see that there are thousands of people coming every Friday they might turn the buildings into shops. This way you can preserve the district as it is, while creating opportunities for interaction and improved livelihoods for the community.

STATEMENT
THREATS AND PROSPECTS

JUST AS MANY SIMILAR industrial areas around the world, Minet El-Bassal might become gentrified in the future, a transformation from industry to shopping. It has a perfect location as it is close to the canal, the harbor and the sea. Hopefully the buildings here are in a state where it is still possible to renovate them, and even let the contemporary activities organize the future transformations. Otherwise it is unfortunately easy to imagine a very similar architecture where the area is organized with shopping malls, cafés and pedestrian streets. This kind of mimetic relation to the existing architectural structures, in combination with totally transformed activities, could give the new area a superficial and alienated atmosphere.

/Helena Mattsson, LECTOR, Architectural School of the Built Environment, the Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm
INTERVIEW
EVERYBODY IS ASLEEP

Waleed Abu Malik, SHOPKEEPER, Minet El-Bassal, Alexandria

How long have you had this shop?
This shop is my father’s and my grandfather’s before that. I am working with my father. He’s been doing this job all his life.

Where do your customers come from?
My customers are those who come to the market and they are from all parts of Egypt. It’s a supply and demand job. We buy and sell. People go down the market and tour the market and if they like something, they buy it.

What are you selling here?
I buy furniture and antiques from various flats. I display the items and then I sell them.

How do you see the future of Minet El-Bassal?
The future of the area is going to be beautiful, but right now it is bad. It will take a long time. I am here both night and day and it is utter silence. No business. All of these warehouses are closed and there are no workers here. If they were open and a lot of people were working here there would be more movement around this place, more selling and buying, more business. But as long it is this empty everything will stay closed. There’s nothing, there’s no life here. Everybody is asleep.
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The University College of Arts and Crafts: www.konstfack.se
The Swedish Institute Alexandria: www.swedalex.org
Gudran Association for Art and Development: www.facebook.com/pages/Gudran-Association-for-Art-and-Development/206654496045533
Alexandria Governorate: www.alexandria.gov.eg
Alexandria University: www.alexu.edu.eg
Pharos University in Alexandria: www.pua.edu.eg
Bibliotheca Alexandrina: www.bibalex.org
Hamzet Wasel Foundation: http://hamzetwasel.com
Jordan University: www.ju.edu.jo
The City of Beirut: www.beirut.gov.lb
Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts: www.alba.edu
98Weeks/Project Space: http://98weeks.blogspot.se
Solidere: www.solidere.com
Istanbul Technical University: www.itu.edu.tr
Syria Trust: www.syriatrust.org
All Art Now: www.sharjahart.org

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