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Community Participation In Informal Settlements Upgrading: A Critical Review

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Abstract

Informal settlements are one of the biggest urban challenges that face urban planners worldwide. On these grounds, the basic needs for a motivated human community require coherence between the environment and well-being. Thus, various interventions are being implemented to improve informal settlements conditions, through upgrading programs that target one or more sector such as social, economic, political, and physical improvements. Some of these programs adopt the participatory approach to their needs' assessment, development plan, and later implementation. Others adopt the top-down approach where community involvement is minimal. Participation is claimed to be the solution for the upgrading process. Contrariwise, there have been contraventions on excessive use of the term participation hamstrung its content.

Consequently, this research postulates that the participatory approach became lately misused as an objective or a target itself rather than a tool to reach a target. Regarding that, the research passes through three phases to test this hypothesis. The first phase includes reviewing literature: to investigate norms of participatory design and the contraventions on its application in the upgrading process. The second phase contextualizes the upgrading process of informal settlements in Cairo and the issue of participation in this context. The third phase, represent the empirical study, which examined the informal settlement of Manshiet Nasser in Cairo; as this area acquired great attention through upgrading by the participatory approach.

The research spots the light on a descriptive analysis for two projects took place in the area where participatory approach is claimed to be adopted. Qualitative methods is followed for this investigation that are observation, secondary data analysis, and semi-structured interviews

The first project is the civil society buildings and the second is the youth training project. As a rebuttal to this point, the projects are being criticized by assessing the efficiency of the participatory upgrading program through a list of indicators that adheres to the theoretical standards of public participation.

An evaluation of the findings reveals that participatory practice fails to meet its theoretical ideals as in practice it covers many "non-participatory" approaches. A comparative analysis of the two projects is carried out to show the chronological framework of the implementation of the participatory approach in the upgrading process.

Finally, the research concludes a set of recommendations and findings towards a successful process for developing informal settlements. Regarding this, participation in urban development should not be a goal by itself. It does not provide a guarantee for the success of any project that claims to include it among its methods. Moreover, the ability of participation approach to help the residents to express their needs and reflect their reality is not necessary the way that their priorities are considered while taking decisions for intervention. Lastly, Strong collaboration between governance, legislation, and participation is required for informal settlements amelioration.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: Introduction	1
1.1 BACKGROUND:	3
1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	4
1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	4
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	6
1.5 METHODOLOGY	7
1.6 SCOPE OF THE THESIS AND SELECTION OF THE CASE	9
1.7 RESEARCH STRUCTURE	9
1.8 LIMITATION	12
CHAPTER 2: Upgrading of informal settlements by participatory approach.....	13
2.1 INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS A SOLUTION TURNED INTO AN URBAN CHALLENGE ...	15
2.1.1 Informal Settlements: A Universal Phenomena	15
2.1.2 Factors for Formation Informal Settlements	16
2.1.3 Informal settlements classifications	19
2.2 STRATEGIES DEALING WITH INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS	20
2.3 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION INTERPRETATIONS	22
2.3.1 Community Participation: A long-term investment!.....	23
2.3.2 Participatory Approach: Brief Overview	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.3.3 Participatory Design	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.3.4 Community Participation an Objective or a Tool	31
2.3.5 Efficiency of Public Participation in Upgrading	33
2.4 CONCLUSION:	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CHAPTER 3 Informality in Cairo and community participation.....	39
3.1 INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE EGYPTIAN CONTEXT	41
3.1.1 Origin and evolution stages Ashwa'yyat.....	42
3.1.2 Types of Informal Settlements in Egypt Geographically	47
3.2 INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS UPGRADING STATUS IN GCR	51
3.2.1 Adopted policy and strategies for development of informal settlements	54
3.2.2 Identification of stakeholders in Upgrading Informal Settlements.....	63
3.3 EMBRACING THE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH IN THE PLANNING PROCESS IN EGYPT	68
3.4 CONCLUSION	71

CHAPTER 4: Efficiency of public participation in Manshiet Nasser	73
4.1 MANSHIET NASSER.....	75
4.1.1 Manshiet Nasser Location	77
4.1.2 Manshiet Nasser Over time: Between formal and Informal	78
4.1.3 Facts to Develop Manshiet Nasser	81
4.1.4 Different Urban Development Programs and actors in MN	82
4.1.5 Summary and Reflections	93
4.2 UPGRADING OF MANSHIET NASSER: A CRITICAL REVIEW ON THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	94
4.2.1 Literature Review	96
4.2.2 Investigated projects in MN:.....	99
4.3 CONCLUSION:	126
CHAPTER 5: Conclusion and recommendation	127
5.1 CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS	128
5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

List of Figures

Figure 1 Research Methodology	8
Figure 2 Informal settlements world wide, Source: (Preininger, 2011)	13
Figure 3 Urban population living in slums and informal settlements around the world. Source (Global Urban Observatory (GUO), 2014)	16
Figure 4 Distribution percentages of urban slum population within the global developing regions, based on (UN-Habitat, 2013)	17
Figure 5 Overlapping informal Settlements spread along with developing regions suffering Corruption according to CPI in 2015 (Transparency International, the global coalition against corruption, 2015)	18
Figure 6 illustrated steps of forming Informal Settlements (Author) adopt from (Afify, 2004)	19
Figure 7 Arnstein Ladder of Participation; Source: (Arnstein, 1969)	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 8 Participation stakeholders (Source: Author, 2015 based on (Mannoun, 2014) (Bass, Clayton, Pretty 1995))	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 9 Participation Stages, Source (Sanoff, 1990)	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 10 Highlighting Egypt as contextualizing the literature review, Source: (Preininger, 2011)	39
Figure 11 Stages of Informal Settlement in Egypt Formulation	42
Figure 12 Informal Settlements' history Development in GCR, Source GIS Database of PDP (TU Berlin, 2010)	45
Figure 13 Evolution of Informal Settlements within the Egyptian Context	46
Figure 14 Informal Settlements on the former private agricultural land, Source :(Khalifa, 2011)	48
Figure 15 Squatters on Deserted former state land, Source: (Khalifa, 2011)	48
Figure 16 Informal Settlements in the City of the Dead, Source :(Khalifa, 2011)	49
Figure 17 Greater Cairo three administrative areas or governorates, Source: (TU Berlin, 2010)	Error! Bookmark not defined.

<i>Figure 18 Four Large Informal Settlements in Grater Cairo, Source: Author Adapted from (Nafeh, 2015)</i>	53
<i>Figure 19 Stakeholder complexty Source (Azouz, 2015)</i>	54
<i>Figure 20 events crosponding government responses toward informal settelmnts</i>	59
<i>Figure 21 Timeline of changes in policy and upgrading interventions in Egypt, Source: Author based on ((Khalifa, 2013, El_Khateeb & El_Shahat, 2012, Alfiky, 2014, Azouz, 2015, Hendawy, 2015)</i>	61
<i>Figure 22 Different institutions responsible for upgrading informal settlements in Egypt, Source: Author</i>	67
<i>Figure 23 Manshiet Nasser; Illustrated by Author</i>	75
<i>Figure 24 Borders of Manshiet Nasser Area; Photography Source: (El-Helo, 2011)</i>	77
<i>Figure 25 Original place before the residents settled in MN, Cairo (Japan International Cooperation Agency JICA, 2011)</i>	79
<i>Figure 26 Timeline between formal and informality (Author)</i>	80
<i>Figure 27 Stakeholder in Manshiet Nasser; Source: (DEVEPER, 2015)</i>	83
<i>Figure 28 Suzan Mubarak Building Source; (Tadamun, 2016)</i>	84
<i>Figure 29 EL Asmarat New Housing Project by ISDF</i>	85
<i>Figure 30 Reasons for/behind the PDP in Egypt, Source: (Hendawy, 2014)</i>	87
<i>Figure 31 Main Intervention in Manshiet Nasser, (Author)</i>	89
<i>Figure 32 Several Upgrading Project in MN Specially Ezbet Bekhiet. Illustrated by the author from GIS Map (DEVEPER, 2015)</i>	92
<i>Figure 33 Chapter study methodology</i>	95
<i>Figure 34 MN Map with illustration of some activities and highlighting the two project studied (Tadamun, 2016)</i>	99
<i>Figure 35 GTZ building where the Post Office is (DEVEPER, 2015)</i>	100
<i>Figure 36 Civil Society Headquarters in MN, Source (DEVEPER, 2015)</i>	100
<i>Figure 37 Needs assessment for MN community for CIF projects, Source Author</i>	102
<i>Figure 38 The former site of the two buildings of GTZ; Source: (ADAPT & E.A.P, 2003)</i>	102
<i>Figure 39 Manshiet Nasser Post Office; Source: Author, 2015</i>	104

<i>Figure 40 Bathroom not used in one of the buildings; Source: Author, 2015</i>	105
<i>Figure 41 Water leakage in the sewage system of the building</i>	105
<i>Figure 42 GTZ two buildings actors flow</i>	106
<i>Figure 43 Fours grades used by the researcher to evaluate the project outcomes</i>	107
<i>Figure 44 Participatory efficiency in each project stage</i>	110
<i>Figure 45 Youth Project Location on MN map</i>	112
<i>Figure 46 Painted Elevation of Manshiet Nasser; Source :(Tadamun, 2016)</i>	112
<i>Figure 47 Media announcement about the Youth training Project</i>	114
<i>Figure 48 Panting Elevation in Manshiet nasser Area</i>	115
<i>Figure 49 Certificate that was given to the trainee as a promise for later staffing; Author, 2015</i>	116
<i>Figure 50 Youth training decision flow</i>	118
<i>Figure 51 Participatory efficiency in each project stage</i>	122
<i>Figure 52 Points of Comparison between the two projects</i>	124
<i>Figure 54 Project level according to ladder of participation</i>	125
<i>Figure 53 Projects phases with Efficiency percentage</i>	125
<i>Figure 55 Visualizing the collaboration between succesful aspects for upgrading; Source: author</i>	130
<i>Figure 56 Interest and power integration; source: author</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<i>Figure 57 Thesis recommendation; Source: author</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.

List of Tables

Table 1 Participation Typology Source: (Pretty, 1995)	31
Table 2 Efficiency principals of public participation Source: (Bessette, 2004; Hassan, et al., 2011; Ridder & Pahl-Wostl, 2005; Mitchell, 2005; Sanoff, 1990)	34
Table 3 Typology of Informal Areas in Cairo Source:(TU Berlin, 2010)(Sims, et al., 2003), (Soliman, 2004) and (El-Sioufi ,1982)	50
Table 4 Approaches by Egyptian government for improving informal settlements, Source: Author based on (Tadamun, 2014)	57
Table 5 GTZ Manshiet Nasser PDP Project Phases, Source:(El_Khateeb & El_Shahat, 2012)	87
Table 6 Several upgrading approaches, Source:(DEVEPER, 2015)	91
Table 7 Evaluation of the two buildings of GTZ	107
Table 8 Indicators of the efficiency of participation in the two headquarter of GTZ project stages	111
Table 9 Evaluation of Youth training project " Elevation Painting"	119
Table 10 Indicators of the efficiency of participation in the Youth training project stages	123

List of Abbreviations

CIF	Community Investment Funds
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DEVEPER	Development Priorities in Informal Areas
EC	Executive Council
GCR	Greater Cairo Region
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GOPP	General Organization for Physical Planning
GOV	Government of Cairo
IS	Informal Settlements
ISDF	Informal Settlement Development Fund
IUSD	Integrated Urbanism and Sustainable Design
LPC	Local Popular Council
MN	Manshiet Nasser
MoHUD	Ministry of Housing and Urban Development
MOSSA	Ministry of Solidarity and Social Affairs
MURIS	Ministry of state of Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements
NGO	Non -Governmental Organization
PDP	Participatory Development Program in Urban Areas
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
SCUPD	Supreme Council of Urban Planning and Development
UN	United Nation
UUU	Urban Upgrading Unit

Chapter 1: Introduction



1.1 Background

Over the past decade, it has been documented that rapid urbanization has become one of the most dominant global trends. Coupled with global economic and resource crisis, such rapid growth makes it nearly impossible for local governments and infrastructure to support the growing population and cities adequately. As a result, overcrowded informal settlements or Slums are created in cities that, according to UN Habitat, lacks needs and adequate housing. Informality has become an imposing urban reality, reaching 30% worldwide and more than 50% in development countries.

Informal settlements are solution done by the low-income community to overcome the government failure to provide them with affordable housing. With the continuous disregarding of the government to those people, a massive growth of informal settlements occurred. Consequently, informal settlements became a challenge for the government, and planners in order to develop it into settlements in the sake of adequate life needs.

As the thesis focuses on Cairo, a city governed by extreme informality, it is not known for sure how many informal settlements there are in Egypt, but in 2005 it was estimated that those areas inhabited almost 6.5 million persons , where almost 60% of them are located in Greater Cairo Region (Abdelhalim,2010, p.3). In other words, every day, millions of needs and rights to an adequate life remain unmet and ignored

The problem of informality in Egypt is that it has always been discussed apart from a national housing policy. Besides, Egypt has a deficiency in land management systems, and there is corruption in the local administration (Alfiky, 2014;Shaat 2014). The rapid growth of the city is explained by the growth of informal settlements, which absorb the majority of existing informal inhabitants as well as the increase of out- migrants. It was noted by Sims (2012) that informal settlements increased 2.5 times after the revolution (Sims, 2012).