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Community Participation In Informal Settlements Upgrading: A Critical Review

A Thesis Submitted for the partial Fulfilment for the Requirement of the Master of Science Degree in Urban Planning

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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.

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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

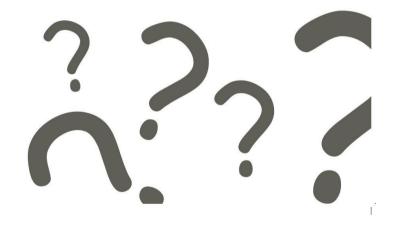
SCAF Supreme Council of the Armed Forces

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 ign ored

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).