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Urban Trojan: Urban social innovations in Egypt between the hands of researchers, the community and public authorities

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This paper introduces a new perspective to recognize the urban social innovation executed by researchers and initiators as "Urban Trojan" in the urban system. It analyses different approaches taken by researchers/initiators to overcome barriers between the public authorities, the community, and the initiators/researchers themselves to execute urban solutions to societal problems. The analysis adopts three approaches to deal with the public authorities presented by Jessy Marsh, the editor of the "Citizen-Driven Innovation" guidebook of good practice on open and participatory approaches to bring citizen-driven innovation to policy makers. This paper metaphorically titles Marsh's approaches as: working in shadow, depending on a hero, and infiltrating through cracks.

Considering these approaches, this paper analyses four different interventions in deprived areas in Egypt. The paper analyses the approach taken by each intervention to deal with the public authorities in relation to their effectiveness and sustainability. Its effectiveness in terms of dissolving boundaries between the different sectors and sustainability to reproduce or open the way for other initiatives to take place. This paper targets generally researchers who work in developing countries in which the system responsible for the urban development is rigid towards urban social innovations. On a local level, it targets Egyptian researchers and initiators concerned with the urban field.

Keywords: urban governance, parallel practices, participatory, social innovations

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Introduction

Following the revolution of the 25th of January 2011, several initiatives were introduced in the hope of making a change for the development of a better Egypt. On the urban and social level, a number of initiatives targeted the claim of the public space, public policy, urban and social upgrade projects, research and community work, etc. Working with almost the same aim and hope, these initiatives varied in scale, agenda and structures. Some of these initiatives were introduced by young initiators, NGOs and non-profit organizations, and on more international spectrum the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and UN-Habitat.

"Informal development has been, and continues to be, the dominant mode of urbanization in many developing countries, including Egypt. It occurs especially on the urban fringes, on privately-owned agricultural land, rather than in desert areas, which would be considered squatting on state-owned land. Despite 30 years of attempts by the government to limit unplanned growth and urban expansion on agricultural land around Cairo, as it has in most Egyptian cities and villages, informal settlements around Cairo sheltered more than 7 million inhabitants in 1998. As of 2006, they are estimated to contain more than 65% of the population of the metropolis." (SéJourné, 2009, p. 17). The informal settlements led to several societal problems. Therefore, several parallel practices to the work of governmental institutions were initiated. They aimed to improve Cairo's urban environment which is deteriorating. Several practices were introduced by young initiators with multi-disciplinary research background involved in urban and social fields.

Some initiatives have helped communities to prepare plans for their neighborhoods' development using participatory approaches such as *Madd Platform*, *10 Tooba*, *Takween* and *DK Shehayeb Consults*. Other initiatives started to raise awareness of the historic built environment which is facing destruction such as *Megawra* and *Save Alex* (10 Tooba, 2015). Other initiatives were introduced by non-profit organizations or NGOs hoping to improve the quality of life of the less fortunate people. Most of these initiatives depended on charity, funding and the work of volunteers. For example, *ma'an* project which translate as 'together', aims to construct residential units to accommodate the informal settlement residents' with a budget of 400 million Egyptian Pound (around 40 million U.S. dollars). Around 106 million was collected to complete the first phase of 5300 units out 60,000 units which should be achieved by the end of 2018 (ma'an, 2013). Some charitable organizations and NGOs such as *Benebny Hayah* (which translates as building a life) have rebuilt or repaired housing and extended services such as water and wastewater in many deprived communities (Benebny Hayah, 2013).

On another level, some projects were introduced by international organization such as the UN-Habitat or GIZ. The UN-Habitat is working on three programmatic areas: (1) urban and regional policies and governance, (2) urban development and environmental climate change, and (3) informal settlements, housing, and urban regeneration. These programs are being processed through a series of ongoing projects. One of its achievements was the "strategic development of greater Cairo" report developed with the ministry of housing and several other governmental bodies. (UN-Habitat, 2012) The GIZ has also agreed with the Egyptian government to work on three research fields: (1) renewable energies and energy efficiency, (2) participatory development, and (3) employment promotion for sustainable economic development. Their plans are executed through several ongoing projects all around Egypt (GIZ, 2012).

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The above mentioned initiatives are sample of different projects which increased the concern to urban and community development issues. This concern drove the UN-Habitat to organize, along with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Communities, and the Ministry of Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements (MURIS) (currently cancelled), the First Egypt Urban Forum (EUF) in Cairo in June 2015. This event brought together several Egyptian institutions, decision makers, civil society representatives, scholars and experts, and private sector companies to build a policy dialogue platform to shape Egypt's future urban agenda and contribute to the World Urban Agenda at the Habitat III Global Conference in 2016. Although the event offered a good platform for networking opportunities, such events tend to be more ceremonial than effective.

These initiatives and events are providing networking opportunities which in turn creates possibilities for researchers in the urban and social fields to transform their initiatives to more realistic urban social innovations. However, a main question is still unanswered: how to execute these urban social innovations and transform them to reality especially in terms of dealing with the public authorities? In order to answer this question, this paper analyzes four executed urban social innovations in deprived areas in Egypt. The *Mozza* (which means the beautiful girl) series of street art work, the main highway road access to *El Me'temdeya* area developed by the community, *Maspero* area urban upgrade project by *Maad* and *Al Athar Lina* (which translates as the monuments are ours) project by *Megawra*.

These projects are considered urban social innovations as they aim to dissolve boundaries and overcome barriers between the public authorities, the community and the researchers/initiators to execute novel solution to the society problems. The Stanford Social Innovation Review defines social innovation as: 'A novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals ... the publication's unique approach to social innovation: "dissolving boundaries and brokering a dialogue between the public, private, and non-profit sectors"'. (Phills Jr., Deiglmeier, & Miller, 2008, pp. 36-37). Based on this definition, this paper analyzes the different approaches of the four initiatives to deal with the public authorities in order to dissolve the boundaries between the public authorities, the community and the researcher/initiator to create urban solution to societal problems.

This paper perceives these boundaries as a wall. This wall needs to be infiltrated in order to open access and dissolve the boundaries between the different sectors together. For this purpose, the term "Urban Trojan" is metaphorically used in reference to the Trojan horse or the computer Trojan. The computer Trojan deceives the system in a hidden and undetectable way, wait for the system to execute them, and make it vulnerable to future entry by creating back doors (J. Garcia, Reilly, & Shorter, 2003), (PC Magazine, n.d.). The term "Trojan" can sound a negative and destructive act. The metaphor is used in this paper to represent the effectiveness of the urban social innovation to be welcomed by the different sectors and to infiltrate their systems without being rejected. It also represents the ability to open the way for other urban social innovation, thus infiltrating the walls between the different sectors and dissolve their boundaries.

Methodology

In order to achieve this paper's research question, the study examines previously executed parallel practices and analyzes the process adopted by the initiator to deal with the public authorities. The main criterion which influenced the case studies' selection process is the

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diversity in the scale of the entity/initiator(s) which is responsible for the urban social innovation. The selected case studies needed to cover a wide spectrum of diverse structural entities from: individual initiator, community base, group of researchers and NGOs initiatives. International organization initiatives, such as GIZ and UN-Habitat, were not included in the study as they represent a different structure. These organizations have their own means to deal with the public authorities which is most of the time related to a wider international agenda.

For this reason, the research investigated these four-selected urban social innovations: The *Mozza* series of street art work, the main highway road access to *El Me'temdeya* area developed by the community, *Maspero* area urban upgrade project and *Al Athar Lina* project by *Megawra*. All these projects are considered urban social innovation as they tried to solve a problem that is facing the society on different urban scale. These urban social innovations varied in its entities starting from an entity of an individual initiator, The *Mozza* to the collective organization of *El Me'temdeya* community. Another form of entity as *Madd* platform, which is a borderless entity that includes independent urban designers and researchers, and finally *Megawra* which works under a formal umbrella as a registered NGO. The case studies were mapped through different methods: (1) the analysis of the publications that the entities produced, (2) interviewing members from each entity, and (3) actively participating with some of these entities while developing some of the case studies. The analysis focuses only on two issues. First, it focuses on the effectiveness of the urban social innovation to dissolve the boundaries between the initiator, the community and the public authorities. Second, it analyzes its sustainability in terms of allowing for such initiatives to be reproduced and to open the door for more initiatives to take place.

The variable aspect between these four initiatives was their working model process to get their work executed and the way they dealt with the public authorities. Their approaches in dealing with the public authorities varied from neglecting, depending and trying to integrate them. In order to put this analysis in a more theoretical framework, this paper adopts in its analysis the approaches presented by Jesse Marsh⁶ to bring initiatives depending on open and participatory approaches to policy makers. These approaches, explained later, are metaphorically titled as: work in the shadow, depend on a hero and infiltrating through cracks.

Theoretical Framework

In October 2015, the city of Palermo hosted its first Urban Thinkers Campus, titled as "City as a Service", organized by PUSH and the World Urban Campaign. This forum aimed to investigate different ideas and solutions, offering an integrated approach and giving voice to the various stakeholders: civil society, public administrations, companies, experts and researchers to meet in order to identify and overcome obstacles towards a smart development (UN-Habitat, 2015). During this event Jesse Marsh presented a book that he edited and mostly wrote called "*Citizen-Driven Innovation: A Guidebook for City Mayors and Public Administrators*".

Although the book is mainly guided to city mayors and public authorities but it provides also several good practices to realize urban innovations. The processes of these practices and

⁶ He worked with learning technologies, teleworking and e-commerce and then in policy work on the link between the information society and sustainable development, cultural diversity and democratic participation. (UN-Habitat, 2015)

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the way they dealt with public participation are of a great importance to any research who intends to work on participatory practices. "The report explores the concept of smart cities through a lens that promotes citizens as the driving force of urban innovation." (The World Bank and the European Network of Living Labs, 2015, p. 8). Beside the content of the book, when Jesse Marsh presented the book in the form, he presented different approaches for young researches and experts to deal with the public authorities when executing their innovations which depend on participatory methods. He mainly presented three approaches which this paper metaphorically titles as: work in the shadow, depend on a hero and infiltrating through cracks (Marsh, 2015).

In the first approach, titled as working in the shadow, initiators try to work without any cooperation or relation with the public authorities. They try to execute their urban social innovations with the community only as if the public authorities don't exist. According to Marsh (2015), this approach will make the work done and the initiator will enjoy it but still its results won't be effective enough or sustainable. He said "I am going to ignore you and I am going to do my social innovation in the backyard and pretend that you don't even exist and it is going to be nice and fun but there is some sort of a limit to the kind of impact that you are going to get." (Marsh, 2015). The second approach is when the initiator or the research finds a hero in the public administration that he/she can deal with. This hero takes care to get him/her the signed documents to do what the initiator thinks he/she wants. According to Marsh (2015), this approach is also not going to work as this hero will leave someday and the initiator will lose the support than he/she depended on to push the public administration in a certain direction. In this case, the process of executing the social innovation is not sustainable.

These two approaches, according to Marsh (2015), aren't enough as they don't target the main problem that faces the initiators which is the lack of innovation in the public administration. He believes that the only possible way is that public authorities should open up to these citizens driven innovations. For sure, they won't do this by their own and here comes the role of the initiator to penetrate through the body of the public authorities' system through cracks aiming to bring the public authorities to the community of initiators from researchers and citizens. This won't happen overnight but it needs several explorations and experiments in order to be able to contaminate the system one day. Throughout these three approaches, this paper investigates four urban social innovations in Egypt and analyzes the way they dealt with the public administration. The analysis of the approaches focuses on the urban social innovation's ability to break the wall between the different sectors and dissolve the boundaries between the initiators, the community and the public authorities in order to solve the existing societal problems.

Working in Shadow Approach

The working in shadow approach refers to the approach explained by Marsh (2015) is when the initiator(s) of the urban social innovation seeks to execute the project without including the public authorities. In the case of Egypt, this becomes more critical as the initiator tries to work without being detected by the public authorities. It is not only about not including them but it is about not being spotted by the system and to stop the initiator's work. This might happen as field work and survey is recently forbidden by law in Egypt except after getting required approvals (Mada Masr, 2016). Such approvals in case of individual initiatives and recently for NGOs are very complicated to get. This paper investigates this approach in two main initiatives where the project was executed in absence of the public authorities. The first is an intervention lead by an artist, the *Mozza*, series of street artwork as a mean of

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upgrading deprived areas as seen in Figure 1. The second project is an intervention lead by the community to build access to main highway road in *El Me'temdeya* area.

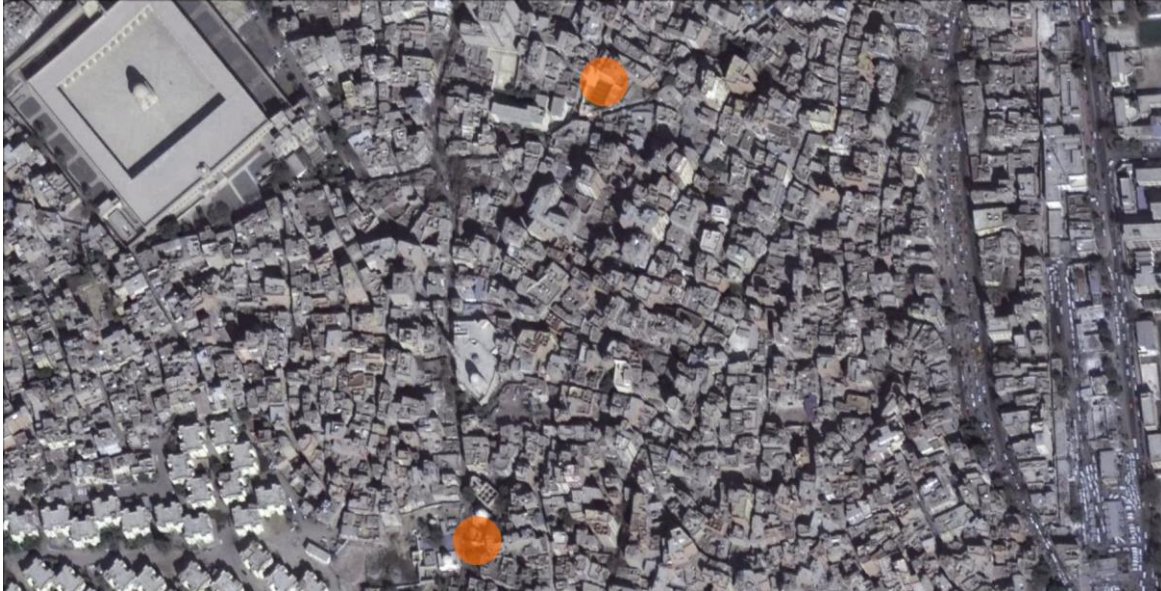


Figure 1. The two interventions by the *Mozza* in Old Cairo. *Source:* Adapted from Google Earth V7.1.5.1557. (July 5, 2015). Cairo, Khalifa.30° 01' 44.04"N, 31° 15' 29.53"E, Eye alt 2298 feet. DigitalGlobe 2012. <http://www.earth.google.com> [April 26, 2012].

The Mozza project

After the revolution, street art became a major mean of reflecting demands, political and social problems, and a parallel media. Several groups of young artists adopted perfectionist notions and started painting the buildings in poor areas. The movement was investing too much effort and money and it had limited impact. In addition to the negative impacts that appeared in offending the residents as they perceived that they needed to be cleaned and re-painted. The process started to take another form, when other planners and artists started to use participatory process in their interventions. Their process can be described under the umbrella of working in shadows as the public authorities were not part of the process as no permits were taken because Graffiti work is recently considered illegal by law.

The *Mozza* is a pseudonym used by a female street artist active in Cairo who prefers to stay anonymous. She communicates with local residents in deprived areas and reflects their own traditions and local culture on their buildings' walls. She has several street artworks in different deprived areas which contributed in the vitality of the public space, and initiated debates within the local community. The presented two art works in this paper, represent the idea of working in shadow as the public authorities were not involved in such initiative.

The first artwork, see Figure 2, is painting on a wall next to a café in Historic Cairo. The artwork represents a group of women sitting in a traditional café. It is well known that traditional cafés in Egypt are male dominant spaces. This artwork reflects a gender societal issue regarding the relationship between women and the public space. This piece is a context specific, as several women visit this spot for religious ceremony, and sit on the sidewalks, in front of the café. Based on the artist, the café's owner used to kick-off women who in front of his place. The artist convinced him that she can implement an artwork to

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promote more customers to his café. The artwork was put on the wall after the café owner approved the design. The artwork enhanced the exposure of the café and attracted more customers. Consequently, the café owner accepted women to sit in the café. In certain events, such as music concerts, the café is chosen for such purposes as the bands can have a nice background. This turns with benefits to the café owner while vitalizing the space as shown in Figure 3.



Figure 2. The art piece represents women replacing men while spending time in a traditional café. (Source: The Mozza, 2016)



Figure 3. The art work was used as background for the musical performance. (Source: The Mozza, 2016)

The other urban social innovation, in Figure 4, by the *Mozza* is reshaping a whole public Space in *Darb el Hosr* in Old Cairo. The project was in collaboration with *Megawra*⁷, to turn an urban pocket used as a garbage pit into a pleasant space and a football field for the young residents in the area. The work idea was to revive an old artwork "The Noah's Arc" done by a local resident in the area. It brings back an oblivion story that was about to vanish, in the local community's memory. It returns their story and sustaining it on a huge wall. The residents in the area perceived an added value to the work as it helps in reclaiming the residents their own legends and stories, in addition that it builds a sense of ownership towards the area.



Figure 4. The Mozza artwork in Darb el Hosr. The collage photos shows the buildings before and after applying the artwork. (Source: The Mozza, 2016)

⁷ *Megawra* is an architecture hub and platform which is operated by the Egyptian NGO, *Built Environment Collective*. *Megawra*. About *Megawra*. Retrieved January 22, 2016, from *Megawra*: <http://megawra.com/about/>

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The model of the work process to develop such urban social innovation can be concluded as follows. In the first case the artist (initiator) communicated with a key person directly, the owner of the café. Then she worked with the community to gain their trust and to develop the artwork. The artist then executed her work self-financed (Mozza, 2016). In the second case, the artist was approached by an already existing body *Megawra* which has already gained the trust of the community and had its key persons through its different projects in the area. The artist then started to execute its intervention which was mostly also self-financed. In the two interventions, both the community and the artist enjoyed the work and the public authorities didn't take any part in the process.

Such a model is inspiring, necessary and impacts the community directly. It allows the initiator to infiltrate the community and dissolves the boundaries. It can also have a snow ball effect allowing future innovations to emerge from such a small intervention. However, its impact is limited by scale, key person(s) and financial circumstances. The amount of impact is relatively small in relation to the amount and scale of problems that the community is facing in such deprived areas.

The main highway road access to El Me'temdeya area

The second example that its work process can be described as work in shadow is the main highway road access to *El Me'temdeya* area. This project is an intervention lead by the community without any collaboration from neither public authorities nor planners. The 2011 revolution opened up the idea of the power of the people. The condition of a fragile state, at that time, provided spaces for the communities to take over and intervene the built environment. Planners and urban designers tried to map informal practices and perceive them as collective decisions by masses to appropriate their built environment. *El Me'temdeya* road is a strong example for this kind of social innovation that solved an urban expansion accessibility problem.

El Me'temdeya neighborhood is an informal settlement on the periphery of Cairo. It appeared in the 1970's as an extension of a rural settlement on agriculture land. Cairo ring-road built in the 1990's aimed to limit the city expansion, however, this didn't occur and the urban expansion increased. The ring-road separated *El Me'temdeya* from *Ard el Lewa* neighborhood which is a bigger informal settlement that has better services and transportation to central Cairo. The residents had to walk for 2 km, crossing below the ring road through an unsafe tunnel, to reach means of transportation that can take them for daily trips, as work, visiting families and shopping.

The local popular committees and community organizations in the area, decided to take matters into hands and fix this problem. The community started to collect money to build an exit and access from the ring road to the area to give access for informal transportation, see Figure 5 and Figure 6. In just six weeks, the community was able to collect the needed money to build the road and they started the work immediately, see Figure 7. After six more weeks, the exit and access were fully built and paved. The community also collected the broken street lighting poles from the ring road, fixed it and reinstalled it on the new road as shown in Figure 8. The community was so proud of such an intervention that solves a major problem that faced the area. Therefore, they invited the governor for the opening of the road, where the governorate blessed the community project by legalizing the road by placing official road signage. They also placed a police station in the tunnel under the ring-road to create a safer area. At that time, the local authorities were keen to win the local community to their side and not to provoke them.

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Figure 5. The ring-road before building the exits.
Source: Google Earth V7.1.5.1557. (October 21, 2010). Giza, Bulaq. 30° 03' 01.93"N, 31° 10' 37.66"E, Eye alt 655 feet. DigitalGlobe 2012.
<http://www.earth.google.com> [April 26, 2012].



Figure 6. The ring-road after building the exits.
Source: Google Earth V7.1.5.1557. (July 5, 2015). Giza, Bulaq. 30° 03' 01.93"N, 31° 10' 37.66"E, Eye alt 655 feet. DigitalGlobe 2012.
<http://www.earth.google.com> [April 26, 2012].



Figure 7. The work in process.
(*Source:* Elnaggarism, 2012)



Figure 8. The community installing the lighting posts.
(*Source:* Elnaggarism, 2012)

Such approach cannot be applicable under a powerful state and efficient laws and policies. The project is a unique autonomous case. It is, however, an urban social innovation as it provides a solution that directly benefited the local community. In addition, it was planned, funded and built by them. In order to sustain their project, they were pretty aware that the government must be involved to legalize their solution. That was, however, after they finished the implementation of the project. Such work model can't be appropriated by urban planners

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to conduct their urban social innovations as its process is illegal. This intervention is a strong case of a working in shadow approach which shows the barrier between the community and the public authorities. It also shows the importance of the role of researchers / initiators to overcome this barrier in order to create a more sustainable environment to implement urban social innovation.

Depending on a Hero Approach

This approach, as described by Marsh (2015), is when the initiator finds a mayor or a key person in the public authorities who he/she can deal with. This hero is an effective person who can push the public authorities towards a certain direction and gets the necessary signature. The *Maspero* area urban upgrade project is a case which in part of its process depended on such a hero. The project that started as working in shadow approach, then it reached a hero in the state. Dr. Laila Iskandar, Minister of Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements (MURIS)⁸, backed up the project. The project, however, stopped when the Egyptian Prime Minister Ibrahim Mehleb resigned and later on the whole ministry was cancelled.

Maspero area urban upgrade project

The parallel practices and the groups that are adopting new approaches in dealing with the built environment, generally have problems of mistrust and miscommunication with the government. However, sometimes there are certain officials who have an understanding to the urban social innovation processes. This open the door for switching from working in shadow process, to working under the umbrella of an official authority that can back up the process, through a key person in the authority.

Maspero Parallel Participatory Project (MPPP) by *Madd* Platform is a case in which a hero was very important for the project's process. The project started in 2013 as a working in shadow approach for 15 months. The project was a participatory upgrade for *Maspero* neighbourhood (See Figure 9).



Figure 9. Maspero neighborhood in Downtown Cairo. (Source: Madd Platform, 2015)

⁸ The Ministry of Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements (MURIS) was actually a new ministry that was established in June 2014 and was aborted after a mere 14 months and its work in informal areas moved to the portfolio of the Ministry of Housing.

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The problem in developing the area goes back to the 1970's when the state was planning to relocate the residents of *Maspero* and use their neighborhood for investments and turning the area to a Central Business District. The project attempted to upgrade the area by dealing with the local residents as a main given in the development equation (10 Tooba, 2015).

Madd Platform team worked closely with the local community to produce a participatory research and a participatory re-planning for their area as seen in Figure 10 and Figure 11. The team was totally depending on the community as a source of power, in negotiating with the authorities. *Madd* worked with the community to produce an urban upgrade plan. The area is inhabited by 3500 families of low- income groups, living in bad conditioned buildings that are standing on land owned by investors from the Gulf. The project's social innovation was to solve the problem of the local community who were living under the hazards of relocation. They worked together with the community on redistribution of land ownerships among stakeholders to keep the potential for investments in the area while creating enough plots to build appropriate houses for *Maspero*'s' residents, see Figure 12 (Madd, 2011). The project's process was unique, as the designers team lived in the area for more than a year.



Figure 10. Workshops with local residents to reach a new planning vision for the area. (Source: Madd Platform, 2015)



Figure 11. Public Presentation to the local community. (Source: Madd Platform, 2015)



Figure 12. Workshop to work on interventions. (Source: Madd Platform, 2015)

By mid-2014, the Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements ministry was created. Dr. Laila Iskandar, the minister, gave hope for practitioners and experts in the urban planning fields, as she has a huge experience in participatory approaches and bottom up development. She

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worked previously with deprived communities in economic upgrading for their areas. Iskandar was a great potential to push MPPP and to include it to the state priorities. Iskandar asked *Madd's* team to present the process in the ministry as shown in Figure 13. Later on, she pushed the project's process more to reach the prime ministry and up to the president. The parallel process became a formal process, by working with the government in validating the project outcome and research.



Figure 13. Official meetings with authorities and public conferences with local residents in Maspero area.
(Source: Madd Platform, 2015)

In early 2015, the project has been officially declared as a project on the list of development projects in Egypt, using the whole principles and approaches that *Madd* Platform implemented. The project was stopped later on when the Prime Minister resigned and the whole ministry was even cancelled. In such a scale, a neighborhood scale, continuing working in shadow was not realistic, as the amount of resources needed exceeds the independent group's capabilities. Iskandar provided such resources in addition to establishing networks with government officials and investors. Depending as well on a hero like Iskandar wasn't the optimum strategy to reach a sustainable process. *Madd* Platform team is trying now to shift its approach towards trying to ensure the continuity of the project and the process. They are trying to take their case to the media and to involve the local public authorities and local politicians hoping to execute their project.

Infiltrating through Cracks Approach

As presented by Jesse Marsh (2015), this approach needs to get the public authorities and the mayor (in the Egyptian case the governor) together to the table with the local community and the researchers and initiators as one community. They need to open up for the urban social innovation. Such process should not take the form of a conference as this is not the way the local community work. Our role as researchers and initiators in this approach is to find cracks in the barriers between the different sectors to bring them together. This approach hopes to contaminate the system one day in order to tackle the public authorities' innovation. For sure, such process will not happen overnight but it needs several explorations and experiments in order to be able to contaminate the system one day.

Al Athar Lina project can represent one of the experiments that hopes to open cracks in the system, as a relationship was built between planners, community and authorities, and made them all working closely to upgrade *El Khalifa* neighborhood in old Cairo. This Approach needs a deep understanding of the system and the way decision-making process is taken, to

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start working in harmony with the public authorities without compromising the process or the principles.

Al Athar Lina

Megawra: The Built Environment Collective reached a good harmony with the authorities through *Al Athar Lina* Project. The project was upgrading *El Khalifa* neighborhood in Old Cairo, by empowering the community to reclaim the benefits of living next to monuments. “*Athar Lina is a participatory conservation initiative that aims to establish modalities of citizen participation in heritage conservation based on an understanding of the monument as a resource not a burden.*” (Megawra, n.d.) From day one, *Megawra* team included the ministry of Antiquities and Cairo governorate as two main stakeholders to work closely with the official employees as well as the local community (10 Tooba, 2015).

Al Athar Lina project by *Megawra* is an ongoing series of projects that is being developed on after the other as shown in Figure 14. The first project involved a series of participatory workshops, seminars, and exhibitions between representative stakeholders and resulted in a set of concept papers prepared collectively that recommended interventions in and around the monuments of the street as in Figure 15. The first project's recommendations lead to two new projects, the establishment of a school for Art and Heritage in a primary governmental school in the street and the conservation of *Shajar al-Durr's* mausoleum in Figure 16 (Megawra, n.d.). These series of projects are trying, day after day, to involve more stakeholders from local public authorities, NGOs and international funding bodies.

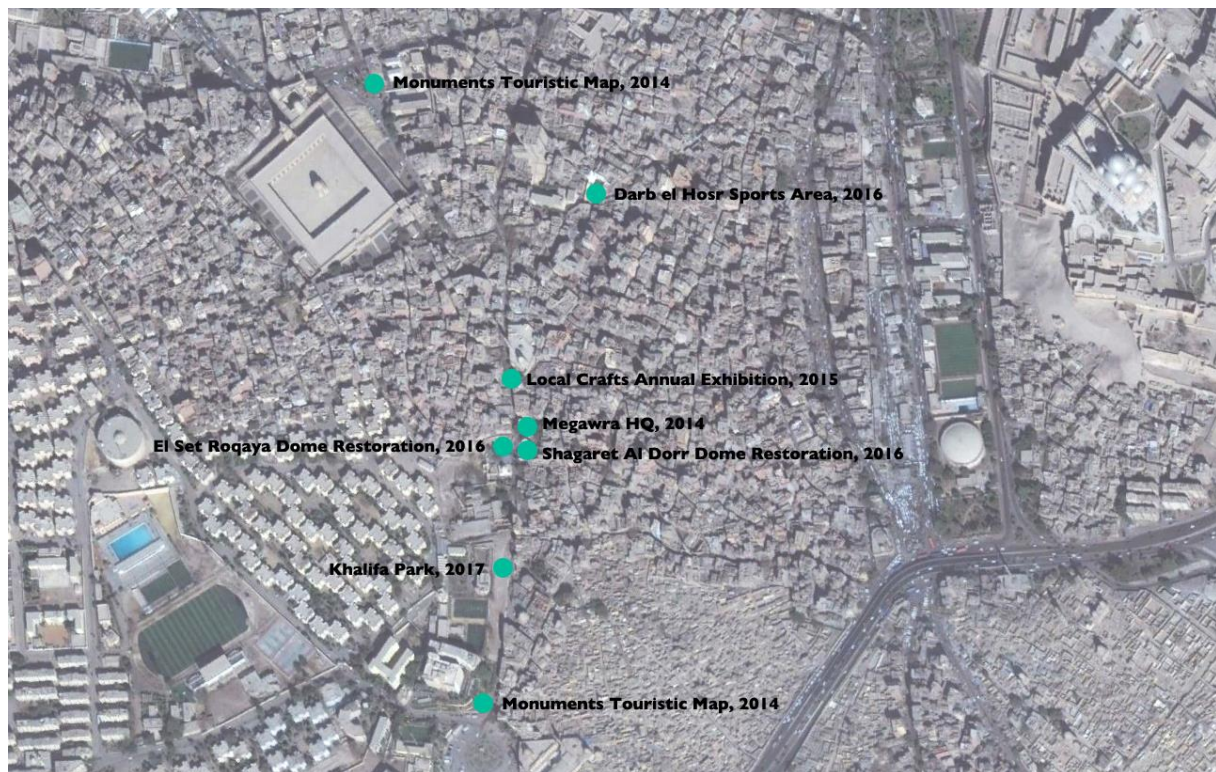


Figure 14. The image shows *Megawra's* incremental upgrade in *El Khalifa* neighborhood in Old Cairo.
Source: Adapted from Google Earth V7.1.5.1557. (July 5, 2015). Cairo, Khalifa 30° 01' 36.05"N, 31° 15' 05.66"E, Eye alt 1270 feet. DigitalGlobe 2012. <http://www.earth.google.com> [April 26, 2012].

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Figure 15. Participatory process with 'El Khalifa' residents to prepare the concept paper. (Source: Megawra, n.d.)



Figure 16. 'Shajar al-Durr's' mausoleum after being restored. (Source: Megawra, n.d.)

On another hand, this project is metaphorically contaminating the local community by raising their awareness of the importance of the historic assets and monuments of their neighborhood. The project is working through a very slow participatory process, but also very efficient and sustainable one. Working with the ministry of Antiquities, ease the process of dealing with monuments in the area, and opened more opportunities to extend the work. Having all stakeholders on board from day one and building a slow process without giving huge promises were the main keys for success for this project. This process assures sustainability, as it fixes minor and major neighborhood problems, step by step. It also upgrades the local community slowly, without having to face sudden changes in the neighborhood. What shows that this project has a different approach then the depending on a hero one is that throughout the years of the project development several ministers and governors were changed without affecting the project continuation.

Discussion

The above mentioned urban social innovations with their different working models in their approach with dealing with the public authorities are considered Urban Trojan. The concept of the Urban Trojan works like a Trojan horse or a computer Trojan. Trojans deceive the system to allow them to infiltrate without being detected. Then, they start to spread while opening back doors for others to enter the system. The same scenario happens with the urban social innovation. The initiator of the urban social innovation wants to affect the different bodies from the urban system including the community and the local authorities in order to dissolve the boundaries between them. The initiator introduces the urban social innovation after being accepted by a body of the urban system that it starts to spread while making the system accept possible future urban social innovation. The impact of the Urban Trojan depends on the way they are designed and on their working process models in dealing with the different members in the system. The Urban Trojan can be found in the previous cases and approaches: working in shadow, depending on a hero and infiltrating through cracks.

In the case of the working in shadow, the urban Trojan is designed to contaminate or to deal with the local community mainly. In this case in order to introduce the urban Trojan a trust is

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needed to be built with the local community through a key person or key NGO in the community. Then the impact of the Trojan mainly affects directly the local community in its small local context. The Trojan also in this case opens the way for other virus or urban social innovation to tackle the same body which is the local community of a certain area. It makes the community more resilient to open up for new innovation. This can be reflected in the artwork of the *Mozza* in the small café in Old Cairo which can offer a platform for more street artwork or other urban social inanities to take place in the area. The impact of such Trojan is, however, very limited in scale and the bodies of the system to be tackled. It is also very limited in comparison to the problems that the community is facing.

The case of depending on a hero is an approach of considerable risk that the Urban Trojan can be detected and eliminated. This approach, although, it tries to contaminate one of the most effective parts of the system which is the public authorities under the protection of high official or a hero, but it is very vulnerable. In this case the hero embraces the Trojan and tries to push it against the existing bodies of the system but with doing this it doesn't fulfil one of the main characteristics of the Urban Trojan which is to be undetected. The hero tries to make the system bent for the urban social innovation thus creating an anti-reaction towards it. Being embraced by the hero, also, limits the Trojan ability to spread through the system and it spots light on it. This also can be reflected in the *Maspero* when the minister tried to embrace the project and to present it to the high officials which after a while reacted by eliminating the whole ministry.

The last approach, infiltrating through cracks, provides a more appropriate setting to host the Urban Trojan. In this case the Urban Trojan is designed to contaminate and tackle the different bodies of the system, researchers (i.e. planners, architects and artists), community, funding organizations, and authorities. The Urban Trojan in this case works with slow pace to gain the trust of the different bodies. It tries to knock different doors through different experiments and explorations to find cracks to infiltrate through these bodies. In the same time, it tries to do this gently without provoking any of these bodies to react against it. Once a crack is infiltrated in any body of the system the Urban Trojan makes these bodies more resilient to accept other urban social innovations. It thus tries to dissolve the boundaries between the different sectors of the urban system and bring them to the same table. This differs from the working in shadow approach as it tries to make different bodies resilient to more urban social innovations not only one element. This happened in *Al Athar Lina* project when *Megawra* offered the opportunity for the *Mozza* to make its artwork in in *Darb el Hosr* in Old Cairo.

Conclusion

The 25th of January revolution provoked a change in how urban concerns are dealt with. Research centers, NGOs, public authorities started to think in different way towards urban issues. They are trying to create opportunities for citizens to reclaim their built environment through different initiatives. Such changes are creating opportunities for research and initiators interested in urban and social issues to work on urban social innovations through participatory process with the community. This change is also starting to create a change in the public authorities to accept such innovations. These urban social innovations act in this changing phase as Urban Trojan in the body of the system trying to open cracks in the walls between the different sectors in order to dissolve their boundaries. The approach in dealing with the public authorities in general and the other stake holders, community, NGOs, funding bodies impacts the effectiveness and sustainability of the Urban Trojan.

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The different approaches discussed in this paper represent the answer to this paper research question which is how to deal with the public authorities in order to execute urban social innovation. The three presented approaches show different scenarios to pursue for the initiators/researchers who are interested to execute urban social innovations. Each approach has different impacts and limitations which need to be taken in consideration by the initiator prior to starting. The three discussed approaches presented by Jesse Marsh (2015) and reflected on four projects in Egypt reveal such an impact. They present the effectiveness of the urban Trojan to infiltrate the different sectors of the urban system represented in the public authorities and the community in order to dissolve the boundaries between them to create urban social innovations.

The working in shadow approach which does include the public authorities spotted in the *Mozza* project showed how the urban social innovation had a limited impact on the local community. The depending on a hero approach which appeared in the *Maspero* project expresses the unsustainability of the urban Trojan although it is embraced by a major key influential person in the public authorities. This approach makes the urban social innovation easily detectable and opposed by other bodies of the system. The opening cracks approach which matches with the appropriated steps to conduct *Al Athar Lina* project by *Megawra* is an ongoing exploration to contaminate the system through such repetitive urban social innovations. Finally, more opportunities to conduct urban social innovation are currently being provided. However, the adopted approach to conduct such innovations reflects on their effectiveness as Urban Trojan and limits their impact in dissolving the boundaries between the different sectors.

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