Acts of Deforming a City; Top-Down Placeless-Making in Pretorian Cairo

Sadek Saad

Department of Architecture, Shobra College of Engineering, Benha University, Cairo, Egypt
Email: sadek.ahmed.saad@gmail.com

Abstract

Top-down or authoritarian urban interventions, in Cairo mushroomed in 2018; flyovers, transforming the streets into express and arterial roads cutting through residential areas. Furthermore, they were carried out in the name of "development"; however, their liveability measures and Placemaking aspects seem questionable. In order to monitor and evaluate the top-down urban interventions' measures, significant cases from Pretorian Cairo were chosen for assessment. Various authoritarian urban interventions from 2018 to 2022 in Cairo are collected, described according to their values, are analyzed in relation to Placemaking aspects and objectives. Neglecting pedestrians' safety, ignoring acts of imagining places for human activities, maximising capitalist profit, creating car-oriented projects and eliminating potential public collaboration produced a process the author calls placeless-making. They presented the following characteristics: overwhelming domination of commercial investments, street billboards in numerous sizes and designs and visually unidentified spaces. No place identity was created, no public collaboration was achieved, and no physical activities were encouraged.

1. Introduction

The linkage between community and space defines the space logic, social use and society contribution (Dabbour, 2020: p. 3). Our streets once functioned as multiple-use spaces, where children could play, and neighbours would stop for conversation. Despite public spaces' socio-cultural role in our lives and memories, vehicles are gaining more priority. In the last few years (2017-2021), autho-

ritarian urban interventions in Cairo reflected a top-down process imposing urban policies and solutions on the local communities. The residents were excluded, marginalised, and streets turned into roads and car-oriented monstrosities. Wide express or arterial roads invaded Cairo's residential areas to reflect the authorities' dream of modernism. Heliopolis, *Ma'adi* and other neighbourhoods were playgrounds for authoritarian massive-scale road engineering projects. The streets widened, and the traffic became faster than ever. Flay-overs were imposed in the city regardless of the urban setting, Figure 1. The author uses the term Pretorian Cairo to identify the Cairene status after the military coup of 2014, in which the SCAF was directly and widely involved in the Egyptian economy and civic life. Furthermore, authoritarian urban interventions in Pretorian Cairo triggered much debate, such as placemaking, motorised traffic solutions or means for generating capitalist profit and power practising.

Cairo is an exciting city; it presents more than a thousand years of history with all its urban paradoxes and phenomena. Formal or planned residential areas, informal housing, social housing and various historic areas are all presented side-by-side in mosaic-like urbanism (Hamdan, 1977). Heliopolis and *Ma'adi*, for example, present colonial urbanism for medium- and high-income housing from the early 20th century. Their street patterns and urban characters were considered role-model for decades in the Arab World. *Medinet Nasr* (Nasr City) presents a socialist-Nasserism ideology from the 60s of the same century (Saad, 2020e). Socioeconomic segregation dominated the city for around two centuries (1840-2022) (Saad, 2020c), as vast arterial roads isolated marginalised and informal housing. Historic areas such as the City Centre (Khedivial Cairo, 1880s) and Historic Cairo (Islamic Cairo, 960s) present various urban typologies, forms and street patterns (Saad, 2019b, 2020d).

Figure 1. A fly-over in a residential area, Cairo; the author, 2022.

Heliopolis was constructed in 1910 by a Belgium real estate investment company owned by Baron Edward Empain. It was designed by combining radial and grid street patterns with public gardens and green islands in the street middle. It promoted public street trams, comfortable and safe physical activities and collective social life. It introduced various place identities and distinguished urban characters (Saad, 1994, 2022a, 2022b). It adapted similar to the "Neo-mamluk" style defined by Nasser Rabbat (2010) but in a celebrative visual mixture. It combines Moorish, Persian and Neo-mamluk styles, Figure 2. Rich ornaments covered most of the iconic buildings and high-income houses. By 2000, the street tram had decayed and become a traffic burden, Figure 3. It stopped functioning

Figure 2. Heliopolis traditional Architectural style; the author, 2022.

Figure 3. Heliopolis Street Tram; the author, 1990.

Figure 4. A placeless solution after construction; a vast road in a residential area; the author, 2020.

a few years later, leaving its railroads as reminders of lost publicness values. Removing the street tram 2010 from Heliopolis's significant streets did not bring the green islands back. After 2018 streets were transformed into roads losing their urban intimacy, **Figure 4**. By the beginning of the 20th century, *Ma'adi* was constructed after the British colonial style of the suburban model. It combined grid-iron street patterns, massive building lots, pitched roof villas and mansions. Trees along the sides of its streets created a green canopy. Walking along a *Ma'adi* street was a pleasant and comfortable experience reminding us of the British garden city's dream. However, street transformation, flyovers and commercial investments deformed the traditional area character.

2. Study Aim and Methods

This study investigates top-down urban interventions in Pretorian Cairo between 2018 and 2022. The research question guides the study: How do top-down urban interventions neglect the community's socio-cultural values by increasing problems in urban liveability measures?

A literature review was conducted to pinpoint concept identification, key themes and placemaking challenges. Significant top-down urban interventions are collected, described and analysed according to their process, functional and symbolic meanings. Describing a top-down urban intervention set of guidelines, functions, and components should help answer the study question. Since monitoring and evaluation are powerful transformative management tools (Mutero & Govender, 2020: p. 4), they were adopted by the author in his assessment. Most case studies were chosen in areas, such as Heliopolis, known for their significant urban and symbolic values, socio-cultural and economic aspects, and the massive top-down urban interventions they witnessed.

3. From Streets to Roads

Cairo witnessed massive-scale urban interventions after 2018; flay-overs, street widening, express roads cutting through residential areas, and displacement of transportation nodes. Various streets were widened, and green islands and public gardens were totally or partially demolished. Top-down urban interventions were not limited to regional and significant arterial or express roads but also invaded local streets in numerous residential areas.

Investigating significant top-down interventions in Pretorian Cairo showed the following results:

- Minimising or eliminating public gardens and pedestrian pavements favour the traffic flow, Figure 5.
- Trees were rarely planted in urban intervention's leftovers; in a few cases, little green areas are created.
- Coffee houses, shops and cafeterias occupied areas under fly-overs, Figure 6.
- While few roads might present potential traffic needs, others present meaningless necessities.
- Design monotony of the authoritarian projects; cheap Islamic ornaments might have been used to collaborate with the area's visual character, Figure 7.
- The authorities neglected significant housing identity and diversity.
- Billboards dominated the urban skyline, Figure 8.
- Fly-overs were also used as advertisement media; animated and electronic billboards occupied significant places facing the traffic, Figure 9.
- In order to widen roads, the authorities demolished the green island totally or partially.

Figure 5. Minimizing a public garden favour traffic flow; the author, 2021 (see Figure 12 for comparison).

Figure 6. A typical case of a commercial facility under fly-over in Pretorian Cairo; the author, 2020.

Figure 7. Design monotony and a naïve Islamic decoration on a fly-over in Heliopolis; the author, 2021.

- While top-down interventions stood with tied hands in front of political and influential structures, Figure 10, they were quickly implemented in low-income- and marginalised neighbourhoods.

4. Placeless-Making and Motorized Traffic

Placemaking is sometimes confusing and contradictory (Wyckoff, 2014: p. 1), and it is essential to differentiate between place and space. Space is created due to the physical structure of the built environment, while place represents the social and cultural meanings attached to space (Little, 2020: p. 1). Furthermore, the

Figure 8. Street billboards in Pretorian Cairo; the author, 2020.

Figure 9. A typical case of using the fly-over for advertisement facing the traffic (electronic billboard); the author, 2021.

place is a *genius loci* presenting its characters and meanings for people, including physical and symbolic values in the built and natural environments (Jivén & Larkham, 2003). Placemaking is multidimensional and concerns the relationship between people-place, place meanings, identity and sense of place (Christy et al., 2021: p. 2). The Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (2020) defines placemaking as the

Figure 10. Influential structures occupying the pavement and narrowing the road; the author, 2020.

process of creating places through the collaborative sharing of community values. Placemaking is also defined as the participatory act of imagining and creating places for human activities (Derr et al., 2018) or as the art of making better places for people (Richards & de Brito, 2017). Furthermore, practising placemaking requires residents' or users' contribution as they have the ability to create a sense of place, place identity and diversity (Saad, 2022a).

Despite the necessity of introducing a bottom-up process in placemaking, top-down interventions triggered much debate as placemaking projects. According to Wyckoff (2014: pp. 4-6) placemaking classification, Cairo's top-down or authoritarian urban interventions can be considered standard placemaking. Egyptian authorities claim specialists guide urban development (Ahram Online, 2021), following general guidelines regarding local needs or identities (Keleg, 2020: p. 155). Nevertheless, the sustainability of standard placemaking is often questionable, as Ashworth (2009) suggests, because standard placemaking deteriorates once funding runs out (Evans et al., 2021: p. 172). Moreover, Cairo history teaches us that top-down or authoritarian projects are unsustainable (Saad, 2019b, 2020b). As the Cairene urban quality declines, the middle and high classes keep migrating to the suburbs (Saad, 2020c).

Every placemaking project is also a transportation project since lack of access to good places leads to widespread social isolation for children and the older population. Whether someone is improving a park, public square, waterfront, or public building, the odds are that there is a street on one or more sides of the site and that street can alter or break designer ambitions. After World War II, concerns about increasing traffic congestion in American cities led to a mass expansion of national road systems. Nevertheless, the USA "freeway rush" of the following two decades left lasting and devastating marks on the physical and social

landscapes of the American nation (Mackenzie, 2015). However, the road engineering rush in Egypt was not limited to regional roads; roads invaded residential areas.

Because of the inherited single-minded assumptions that the car must be king in the modern city, authoritarian projects in Cairo have been designed to meet mobility needs rather than socio-cultural aspects. Following the footsteps of the United States and Dubai encourages the state to create express and arterial roads and fly-overs in Cairo. The preliminary observation of authoritarian urban interventions creates an overwhelming impression that traffic must be supreme and streets are primarily zones for cars and transporting goods, Figure 11. However, unnecessary roads and fly-overs presented themselves in low-density traffic roads and low-income housing. Furthermore, Cairene road networks were not always designed according to the codes; various roads changed their width and level according to physical barriers along their straight path. Cairene top-down interventions can be seen as building transportation through communities rather than creating communities through transportation.

Arguing that traffic necessity is the core objective of authoritarian urban interventions in Pretorian Cairo seems questionable. Roads encourage through-traffic in residential areas, which become divided in the process, and the public space is destroyed in the name of 'development', see Figure 11. By clamming to tackle urban problems, the Egyptian authorities seem to neglect two facts; only 12% of the Egyptians are car owners (Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, 2021), and the city should be people-oriented (Bernner et al., 2012). Furthermore, the authoritarian urban interventions neglected the basic fundaments

Figure 11. A road cutting through a residential area in Pretorian Cairo (after removing the street Tram; see Figure 3 for comparison); the author, 2021.

of placemaking; and the bottom-up process's role in creating place identity and sense of place. Authoritarian urban interventions cannot be considered placemaking projects; instead, they should be considered placeless-making or -solutions.

Ignoring the collaborative role of the local community, creating car-oriented solutions and fly-overs lead to a sense of placelessness where space does not convey any meaning, mainly if placelessness is described as culturally unidentifiable environments similar anywhere (Najafi & Shariff, 2011). Traffic necessity might be meaningful for the through traffic, but for the residents, it is meaningless and harmful (DeMilked, 2019).

5. The Public Health and Safety

Cities should be enjoyable places to live in if they are designed for collective activities and provide equal opportunities for urban resources (Gehl, 2010), as having equal and easy access to public space promote cities' creation for people (Roger, 2010). The city should provide opportunities for physical activities such as walking in a safe and secure environment (Khemri et al., 2020) and using vegetation in placemaking to sustain the liveliness of the urban space (Khemri et al., 2020). The Urban Quality of Life (UQoL) depends on countless factors; physical features are essential as healthy living and security (Meyer, 2018). In Pretorian Cairo, streets are widened, green areas are demolished; an act in social media called Trees Massacre, Figure 12. While demolishing public gardens and green areas harms public health (Cruwys et al., 2022), traffic-oriented projects increase vehicle emissions, degrade air quality, contribute to greenhouse gases causing climate change and reduce life satisfaction (Meyer, 2018). Furthermore, private transportations reduce physical activity, which is a leading culprit of our

Figure 12. A typical case of the authoritarian 'Trees Massacre' in Pretorian Cairo; the author, 2019.

current obesity and chronic disease (Project for Public Spaces, Inc., 2018).

How the authorities deal with public gardens might lower our expectations of urban liveability values. Although few placeless solutions present natural elements, Figure 13, they do not attract people or offer them comfort while performing physical activities and searching for relaxing experiences as public places should (Jamhawi et al., 2020: pp. 687-688). Of the few public gardens remaining in Pretorian Cairo, the significant ones were fenced, and entry fees were forced. Endured residential and public gardens were fenced and locked totally, Figure 14 and Figure 15.

Figure 13. A typical case of greenery in authoritarian placeless solutions in Heliopolis; the author, 2022.

Figure 14. A typical case of a fenced and locked public garden in Pretorian Cairo; the author, 2019.

Figure 15. A typical case of a fenced and locked public garden in Pretorian Cairo; the author, 2019.

Investigating authoritarian placeless solutions in Pretorian Cairo constructed our perspective on public health and safety. Pedestrians' and drivers' safety, traffic engineering regulations and necessity have not been taken seriously, as the authorities argue. Transforming residential streets into arterial and express roads in Pretorian Cairo exposed children and elderly citizens to an unsafe urban setting. Billboards were scattered along significant roads and blocked much of the view, Figure 16. Authoritarian car-oriented solutions did not take advantage of historic urban experiences in Europa and the USA. When Le Corbusier promoted the road as a "machine for producing traffic" in 1924, congestion began to cause severe problems in cities like Paris and New York. At the same time, Le Corbusier urged people to leave their cars in the outskirts and take the subway to the office; "an amazing paradox! His solution?" (Mackenzie, 2015).

However, what was suggested by Le Corbusier regarding the use of public transportation, which was widely implemented in European cities, was unhelpful to the Egyptian authorities. Instead of directing the public expenditure to develop better public transportation networks, to reduce the use of private cars, they imposed car-oriented solutions. Demolishing gardens and pavements and introducing vehicle-oriented solutions decrees the liveability measures in Cairo. Even if the traffic flow becomes faster for some time, citizens will suffer from unhealthy and unsafe urban quality. The electronic billboards, facing the traffic flow and the intensive use of billboards along significant roads create unsafe driving experiences due to billboards' visual (colour and design) attraction, Figure 17. Furthermore, how commercial activities are placed neglects site constraints and suggests that safety is not the authorities' primary concern.

Figure 16. Street billboards block much of the view in Pretorian Cairo; the author, 2022.

Figure 17. A festivity of billboards in Pretorian Cairo; the author, 2022.

6. Placelessness, Profit and Authoritarian Power Representation

Constructing roads and fly-overs is profitable and straightforward (Saad, 2020c); they do not consume time or present engineering difficulties. Generating profit from placeless projects is not limited to construction and labouring work but also commercial activities. The existence of the same chain of fuel stations, coffee-houses and shops, in most cases, creates the impression of an economic monopoly, Figure 18 and Figure 19.
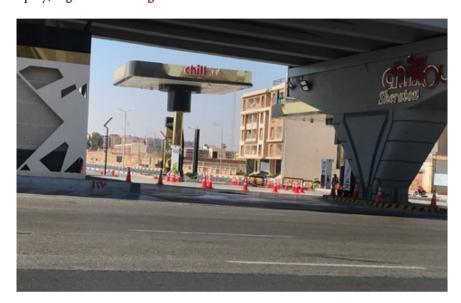

Figure 18. Chillout; a SCAF petrol station at a traffic junction and a fly-over's leftover; the author, 2020.

Figure 19. The commercial monopoly of a SCAF petrol company in an authoritarian project left over and replacing a functioning unsafe garden by the Military Academy, Heliopolis; the author, 2022.

While private investors and business people in Pretorian Cairo require a hard-to-get official building permit, the SCAF investment companies require non. As a result, constructing their commercial structures such as shops, fuel stations, or coffee houses is done without compliance with the Egyptian public code. They are constructed under flay-overs, at traffic intersections and U-turns, see Figure 18. The SCAF companies enjoy taxes- and customs-free materials and construction costs, free building lots, and marginalised labouring costs. Private investors are facing one of two alternatives; either to invest in small businesses or under the SCAF companies' umbrella as sub-contractors or tenants (Sawiras, 2021). Furthermore, the SCAF can transform or occupy any part of the public domain, even if it is a pavement or a garden for commercial investment, Figure 20 and Figure 21.

Billboard distribution and types can only be related to commercial and marketing objectives or political propaganda. Commercial structures, billboards, and street advertisements emphasize the authoritarian capitalism approach in the public space. Public spaces, pavements and road shoulders became urban assets for pure profit. It is unclear how many authorities control their spreading, income and renting's policy, but the SCAF owns a significant share. Military camps and facilities took advantage of the placeless projects by projecting gigantic billboards over the road facing traffic and introducing commercial investments along their exterior walls and façades, see Figure 16 and Figure 17.

Profit seems to be a significant motive for authoritarian placeless-making. Regardless of the design, construction and operation profit generated, capitalist thinking drives the authority decision-making. A green area occupied a leftover traffic project between the Military Academy and the Cairo International Airport, for example, surrounded by express wide roads and flay-overs; informal

Figure 20. A green island during its transformation to a commercial hub in Pretorian Cairo; the author, 2022.

parking and unsafe formal children's playground emerged. The non-residential area's significant location might explain its existence in a traffic node as a celebrative value. However, after its construction in 2019 and within three years, the authorities changed their decision and reconstructed a significant part of the site as a commercial motor zone, see Figure 22 and Figure 19. Corresponding to Hausmann's objectives in "developing" Paris (Panerai et al., 2005), the Pretorian state aimed to generate urban assets by levelling more than the road needed for commercial investments. However, while Hausman encouraged the private sector and banks in urban investment, the Pretorian state aimed at renting their commercial structure for continuous profit and control.

Power is the ability to make decisions or make others do what the decision-makers have them do. It can be traced in the Cairene urban structure and

Figure 21. The previous green island (in Figure 20) during the construction of a road and the massacring of its trees; the author, 2018.

Figure 22. An public garden (by the Military Academy; on the left side) during its transformation to a commercial hub; the author, 2022.

determined by the players or forces in action, wealth, authoritarianism, social norms, and the nature of collective or mass activities (Abaza, 2007; Allen, 2010; Saad, 2019b, 2020b). Moreover, producing public spaces is directly related to governance structure and type, among which political-driven spaces emerge from a top-down authoritarian process, targeting on-time and under-budget delivery (Project for Public Spaces, Inc., 2018). This has not been the case throughout most of Cairo's history; the street has held vast social, commercial, and political activities as a powerful symbol of the public realm (Saad, 2019a).

As public spaces represent the state's power (Assala, 2014), the authorities control the decision-making process and become the main factor in shaping the public domain (Hegazy, 2020: p. 189) because the city is a civic arena for power practising (Rajevic, 2020) and representation (Saad, 2020b). To understand the concept of urban power, we need to answer the following questions; why is it practised? Or What is the benefit of practising it? And by whom? Since spaces do not become public due to law affirmation, rather than through all sorts of collective routinised practices (Koch & Latham, 2021), the authorities created their placeless projects without any public negotiation, deliberation or collaboration.

Public gardens and private structures in Pretorian Cairo did not prevent the authorities from transforming streets into roads, as they were quickly demolished. Nevertheless, influential structures occupied the pavements and traffic lanes, see Figure 10. Streets containing high-power representational buildings such as police stations and military facilities were not widened; instead, a security wall or fence blocked a significant part of the roads leading to uneven road width (no photos could be taken).

Power contestation can emerge between various influential authorities or players and between the state and the public. On the 25th of January, Cairo streets were sites for political contestation, where millions took to the street to protest widespread police brutality and social injustice. Cairo's significant spaces became near-exclusive places for young protestors, challenging the state's power in controlling the public domain. Protestors' control of public places during the 25th of January revolution might have triggered the authoritarian placeless solutions in Cairo.

The authorities argued that their traffic solutions would develop Cairo in general and marginalised housing in particular. Nevertheless, it is depressing to notice that marginalised classes suffered the worst from fly-overs cutting through their residential areas and imposing speeding through traffic. Even when marginalised housing was not demolished, fly-overs in front of the building blocked the sunshine, light, and view and invaded the families' social privacy, Figure 23 and Figure 24. However, instead of developing marginalised neighbourhoods by creating public gardens, open areas for physical activities and social gatherings, fly-overs and express roads tore their urban setting apart and strengthened Cairo's socioeconomic segregation and urban neglect. While constructing identified places has immediate benefits for the wellbeing and can be an intermediate step

Figure 23. A fly-over blocking the sun and view in a marginalised residential area, Pretorian Cairo; the author, 2018.

Figure 24. A fly-over partially blocks the sun and view in a middle-class residential area in Pretorian Cairo; the author, 2022.

towered challenging neighbourhoods disadvantages (Cruwys et al., 2022: p. 7), authoritarian placelessness increases neighbourhood disadvantages and social isolation.

Making vehicle-oriented decisions is a way of attending to the powerful classes by creating meanings that collectively shape the experiences within a given site (Koch & Latham, 2021), favouring the wealthy. Car-oriented solutions were aggressively implemented in marginalised housing, demonstrating the authorities'

socioeconomic discrimination and attending to the decisive classes, Figure 25. Developing or upgrading disadvantaged neighbourhoods should be achieved by building communities. However, the Egyptian authorities promoted solutions leading to unidentified spaces, air pollution, unsafe housing and insecure areas. Despite the state's motto of protecting and supporting the community marginalised and middle classes, after 1970, the Egyptian state played a different political role (Bale & Blake, 2017; Dorman, 2007; Sims, 2011).

Socioeconomic neglect has been a Cairene urban phenomenon since the beginning of the 19th century (Saad, 2020a); however, the Pretorian Cairo demonstrated added socioeconomic discrimination and urban neglect driven by the state power and their elites. The Pretorian state's socioeconomic discrimination against the marginalised and middle classes can be identified in marginalised and middle-class housing. For example, a local street in Heliopolis demonstrates a typical case of socioeconomic discrimination and powers' impact on authoritarian placeless solutions. To transform streets into roads, the authorities demolished the pavement and the green buffer zone from one side and left the other side. The demolished side shows a medium-income class's apartment blocks, and the primarily untouched side shows high-income residential blocks, foreign banks, and luxury shops, Figure 26.

Contemporary Egyptian authorities' urban interventions remind us of Ismail Pasha's urban "modernization" of Cairo in the late 19th century. The physical outcome differs, but the generating forces and values are very similar. Ismail Pasha's urbanisation's primary objectives were; political propaganda, economic profit and practising authoritarian control over the urban (Saad, 2019b, 2020a).

Figure 25. A road widening, social housing levelling and creating an urban-commercial opportunity (by removing more than the road need) in Pretorian Cairo; the author, 2022.

Figure 26. A typical case of favouring the influential players at the expense of the middle-class income citizens; demolishing the pavement and the green buffer in front of middle-class housing at the left and keeping the right side, Heliopolis; the author, 2020.

The author could not determine whether power in Pretorian Cairo was practised to generate a profit by transforming the city into capitalist assets or urban placelessness was practised to gain power. Both cases seem logical, considering the economic struggle between the SCAF and president Mubarak (1970-2011) and his business entourage (Egyptian/German El-Obour Master Plan Study Group, 1980). Similarly to Paris Humanisation (Jordan, 2015), the Pretorian Cairo's road solutions might have aimed at granting easy and quick access to security or military forces to various locations in case of potential political contestation and space occupation.

Thus, other alternative presents latent objectives for power practising in Pretorian Cairo, such as imposing control over the urban and eliminating any potential contestation due to speeding traffic or meeting the high-class' modernism perspective. Cairo urbanism was the playground for state political propaganda and profits by representing the state's power and control. The SCAF construction companies, authorities and car-owners seem to be benefiting from practising power, and power is practised for authoritarian representation, political control and generating substantial profit.

7. Conclusion

The Pretorian Cairo urban interventions cannot be regarded as placemaking since placemaking's fundaments were not met.

As traffic safety was neglected in authoritarian placeless solutions in countless cases, having hidden agenda is suggested.

Building transportation through communities directly results from the authoritarian placeless solution, although they argue otherwise. Traffic flow seems not

to be the authorities' primary concern; instead, introducing a care-oriented solution is just a means for achieving higher ambitions.

Constructing flay-overs and transforming streets into roads seem not people-oriented solutions; socio-cultural discrimination and economic neglect might have motivated such a careless decision.

Imposing commercial investments in all investigated authoritarian placeless solution suggest a capitalist-driven objective. As the public space's marketing and branding became an authoritarian objective, project leftovers were loaded with commercial investment.

Street billboard design and distribution, ignoring acts of imagining places for physical, collective and individual activities, presenting car-oriented solutions and eliminating any potential idea of public deliberation are various dimensions of Pretorian Cairo's placelessness. Political propaganda, capital profit, socioeconomic neglect and power representation seem to be the symbolic outcomes of the authoritarian placeless solution.

Pretorian authorities' and Ismail Pasha's of the late 19th century hidden ambitions of "modernizing" and "developing" Cairo seem alike. Both of them seem to aim at creating or strengthening the ruling class power, and redistributing wealth by controlling the urban. However, wide roads and flay-overs of the 21st century replaced Hausmann's Boulevards and Avenues of 19th century Cairo as the physical outcome of practising power by the new elites. In contemporary Cairo, the power is redistributed among the new Egyptian elites, practised for maximising their wealth and eliminating older forces. As long as the Egyptian authorities take the same action, we will continue to get the same results: cities for profit, cars or political propaganda, not people.

The authoritarian placeless solutions' message seems precise; only citizens with financial means and powerful pivotal positions have the right to enjoy an urban liveability; it is an added dimension in Pretorian Cairo's socioeconomic discrimination.

Despite the author's impression that Pretorian Cairo's authorities imposed placeless solutions out of capitalising on the urban for generating easy profit, the data availability leaves us uncertain in this matter. Countless alternatives gain merit due to available data, such as: authoritarian power representation, political propaganda and control, and the new authoritarian elite shift in Pretorian Cairo's socioeconomic structure.

Top-down placeless-making in Pretorian Cairo presents countless dimensions. However, in this study, the author investigated its design monotony, traffic vision, power of making decisions regardless of the community needs and how placeless-project is directed for profit generation.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

Abaza, M. (2007). Communication, Power and Counterpower in the Network Society. *International Journal of Communications, 1,* 238-266.

Ahram Online (2021, June 4). *Sisi Inspects Development and Maintenance Work on Cairo's Ring Road.*
https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/413554/Egypt/Politics-/In-Photos-Sisi-inspects-development-and-maintenanc.aspx

Allen, J. (2010). Powerful City Networks: More than Connections, Less than Domination and Control. *Urban Studies, 47,* 2895-2911. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098010377364

Ashworth, G. (2009). The Instruments of Place Branding: How Is It Done? *European Spatial Research and Policy, 16,* 9-22. https://doi.org/10.2478/v10105-009-0001-9

Assala, A. (2014). *Whose City?* Master, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar.

Bale, C., & Blake, J. (2017). *Greater Cairo: From Patriotism to Privatization Urbanization & Development.*
https://www.academia.edu/35890501/Greater_Cairo_From_Patriotism_to_Privatization_Urbanization_and_Development

Bernner, N., Marcuse, P., & Mayer, M. (2012). *Cities for People, Not for Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City.* Routledge.
https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203802182

Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (2021, March). *Egypt in Figures-Income, Expenditure.*
https://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/Publications.aspx?page_id=5104&YearID=23599

Christy, F., Raissa, G., Sihotang, S., & Wijaya, K. (2021). Critical Analysis of Urban Livability Measures Based on the Perspective of Placemaking. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science, 764,* Article ID: 012016.
https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/764/1/012016

Cruwys, T., Fong, P., Batterha, P., Calear, A. L., & Evans, O. (2022). Boosting Neighbourhood Identification to Benefit Wellbeing: Evidence from Diverse Community Samples. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 81,* 1-9.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2022.101816

Dabbour, L. (2020). Morphology of Quarters in Traditional Arab Islamic City: A Case of the Traditional City of Damascus. *Frontiers of Architectural Research, 10,* 50-65.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foar.2020.11.004

DeMilked (2019). *Egyptian Government Decides to Build a Massive Highway Straight through a Residential Area|DeMilked.*
https://www.demilked.com/highway-in-residential-area-cairo-egypt

Derr, V., Chawla, L., & Mintzer, M. (2018). *Placemaking with Children and Youth: Participatory Practices for Planning Sustainable Communities.* New Village Press.

Dorman, W. J. (2007). *The Politics of Neglect: The Egyptian State in Cairo, 1974-1998.* Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Political Studies and International Relations, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Egyptian/German El-Obour Master Plan Study Group (1980). *El-Obour Master Plan Study: Phase A/B Areal Analysis.* Ministry of Reconstruction and State for Housing and Reconstruction.

Evans, J., Vacha, T., Kok, H., Watson, K., & Scholl, C. (2021). How Cities Learn: From Experimentation to Transformation. *Urban Planning, 6,* 171-182.
https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v6i1.3545

Gehl, J. (2010). *Cities for People*. Island Press, Landscape Architecture Foundation.

Hamdan, G. (1977). *Geography of Cities*. Alam El-Kutub.

Hegazy, I. (2020). The (No-) Public Space. Reviewing the Transformation of Al-Qaed Ibrahim's Urban Image. *The Journal of Public Space, 5,* 177-192. https://doi.org/10.32891/jps.v5i1.1257

Jamhawi, M., Alshawabkeh, R., & Alobaidat, E. (2020). Spatial Modelling of Transformation of Public Open Spaces in Zarqa, Jordan. *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning, 15,* 685-703. https://doi.org/10.18280/ijsdp.150511

Jivén, G., & Larkham, J. (2003). Sense of Place, Authenticity, and Character. *Journal of Urban Design, 8,* 67-81. https://doi.org/10.1080/1357480032000064773

Jordan, D. P. (2015). Paris Haussmann and After. *Journal of Urban History, 41,* 541-549. https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144215571567

Keleg, M. (2020). Prospects of Placemaking Progression in Arab Cities. *The Journal of Public Space, 5,* 153-166. https://doi.org/10.32891/jps.v5i1.1255

Khemri, M. Y., Melis, A., & Caputo, S. (2020). Sustaining the Liveliness of Public Spaces in El Houma through Placemaking. *The Journal of Public Space, 5,* 129-152. https://doi.org/10.32891/jps.v5i1.1254

Koch, R., & Latham, A. (2021). Inhabiting Cities, Domesticating Public Space: Observing Change in the Public Life of Contemporary London. In M. Mitrašinović, & V. Mehta (Eds.), *Public Space Reader* (pp. 374-383). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351202558-56

Little, S. (2020). Engaging Youth in Placemaking: Modified Behavior Mapping. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17,* Article No. 6527. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17186527

Mackenzie, A. (2015). *Reimagining Our Streets as Places: From Transit Routes to Community Roots*. https://www.pps.org/article/reimagining-our-streets-as-places-from-transit-routes-to-community-roots

Meyer, P. (2018). *Air Pollution and Urban Quality of Life in Europe*. MSc, KU Leuven.

Mutero, I., & Govender, I. (2020). Monitoring and Evaluation of Transformative Creative Placemaking on University Campuses. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 56,* 1577-1589. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909620975804

Najafi, M., & Shariff, M. (2011). The Concept of Place and Sense of Place in Architectural Studies. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 5,* 1054-1060.

Panerai, P., Castex, J., Depaule, J., & Samuel, I. (2005). *Urban Forms: The Death and Life of the Urban Block*. Architectural Press.

Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (2018). *Placemaking: What if We Built Our Cities around Places*? https://www.pps.org

Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (2020). *How a Road Diet Can Amplify the Impact of Placemaking*. https://www.pps.org/article/how-a-road-diet-can-amplify-the-impact-of-placemaking

Rabbat, N. (2010). *Mamluk History through Architecture. Monuments, Culture, and Politics in Medieval Egypt and Syria*. AUC Press. https://doi.org/10.5040/9780755697472

Rajevic, M. (2020). When a Social Movement Quarantines: The Power of Urban Memory in the 2019 Chilean Anti-Neoliberal Uprising. *Space and Culture, 23,* 286-292. https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331220938632

Richards, G., & de Brito, M. (2017). Events and Placemaking. *International Journal of*

Event and Festival Management, 8, 8-23. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-09-2016-0063

Roger, R. (2010). Forward. In J. Gehl (Ed.), *Cities for People* (p. 11). Island Press: Landscape Architecture Foundation.

Saad, S. (1994). *Die Visuellen und Ästhetischen Faktoren, die die Gestaltung der Städtischen Räume beeinflussen, am Beispiel von Kairo [The Visual and Aesthetic Factors affecting Urban Spaces in Cairo].* PhD, Technical University.

Saad, S. (2019a). *El-Kahira el-Tarykheya. Khetabat el-Sametien. (Historic Cairo, Messages of the Silent).* Kotobna for Personal Publications.

Saad, S. (2019b). Cairo in the Age of Great Urban Transformations. Changes in Street Patterns Only, or a Shift in Power Networks as Well? In *The Second International Conference on Islamic Architectural Heritage; The Future and the Built Environment* (pp. 389-408). Fatih Sultan Mehmet Universitesi.

Saad, S. (2020a). *Kakiret el-Tahaworat el-Kobra (1805-1950) (Great Urban Deformations' Cairo: 1805-1950).* Kotobna Publications.

Saad, S. (2020b). Power and the City. Cairo an Arena for Profit, Class Dispute or Political Propaganda? *International Journal of Engineering Applied Sciences and Technology, 5,* 83-95. https://doi.org/10.33564/IJEAST.2021.v05i11.012

Saad, S. (2020c). Urban Injustice, Socio-Economic Neglect and Segregation in Cairo. *International Research Journal of Engineering and Technology (IRJET), 7,* 2796-2804.

Saad, S. (2020d). Impact of Major Mosques on Urban Street Patterns; Why the Renaissance's Urban Rules must Be Applied? *International Research Journal of Engineering and Technology (IRJET), 7,* 257-265.

Saad, S. (2020e). The Myth of Nasser's Arabism. Cairo (1956-1970), a Political-Urban Paradox. *International Journal of Engineering Applied Sciences and Technology, 5,* 37-45. https://doi.org/10.33564/IJEAST.2020.v05i05.007

Saad, S. (2022a). Claiming the Place; Informal Placemaking, Power and Territorial Identity in Heliopolis, Cairo. *Journal of Art and Design, 1,* 46-60. https://doi.org/10.31586/jad.2022.246

Saad, S. (2022b). Women and Places; Female Street Vendors, Territorial Identity and Placemaking. *Journal of Art and Design, 2,* 1-14. https://doi.org/10.31586/jad.2022.297

Sawiras, N. (2021, November 9). *Real Estate Development in Egypt. A TV Interview.* The Society of Real Estate in Egypt.

Sims, D. (2011). *Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City out of Control.* The AUC Press. https://doi.org/10.5743/cairo/9789774164040.001.0001

Wyckoff, A. (2014). Definition of Placemaking: Four Different Types. *Planning & Zoning News.* http://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/375/65814/4typesplacemaking_pzn_wyckoff_january2014.pdf