MANSHIET NASSER
Defining People .. Defining Place
reading the city through territorial claims

Is the place what defines people..?
Who is defining place..?

COMMUNITY?
A large social group that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. Human societies are characterized by patterns of relationships between individuals sharing a distinctive culture and institutions. Community may refer either to the entirety of humanity or a contextually specific subset of people.

The variety of reasons which made Manshiet Nasser appear, created the contrast in its patterns.

Overcrowding
High proportion of poor
Varaity of intersections

DIVERSE
Topography
Well located
Well connected

IDENTIFICATION
explore the cognitive
deliberation
behavior
attention
focus

Institution
memory
word
record
retrieval

Topography
Well located
Well connected

When elements of this process keep changing and interacting, a state of mind representing “identity” is generated at the center, leading to resilience; affected by the main two forces - attraction and centrifugal - keeping the balance, preventing dominating each other, by achieving a level of legitimization, measured by the strength of identity and the level of cognition, which given by the continuous change, with features of the shifting multidimensional identity. By this process every resilience area, considered as a center with identity and territorial claims.

what happens when a society is DIVERSE?
Manshiet Nasser which stretches along the Moqattam Hills, was used as a limestone quarries from Fatimid times up until recently. Moqattam means, the intermittent parties, what you can see this interrupted all over the place.

The only historic building of significance in the area is the mousqe of El Amir El-Tengizi (1362 AD). A map of the area shows there were no buildings except this mosque and the railway line built by the British, which defined the eastern limits of the cemeteries of Qait Bey, Barqouq, El Mugawriin, and El Garafa.

In the early 1960s, a group of retailers in Mosske, were living where Dar El-Eftaa located these days, which is the edge of Fatimid Cairo. People were asked by government to evacuate the place, to build a hospital, by using their building’s blocks which is from The Moqattam Hills.

The rocks and land weren’t useful and good, so it built up where El Hussein Hospital now, later Dar El-Eftaa occupies land with Al Khaleedien garden.

After relocation and settlement at the edge of historic Cairo then, at the border of Old Cairo, southeast, out side the Autostrad, at the beginning of the Moqattam Hills.

Movements from government started to demolished buildings, which made people write a telegram for President Gamal Abdel Nasser, telling him that demolishing is waste for country’s wealth, what made him respond by: Let them work, let them be. These were followed by workers in the adjacent limestone quarry and finally joined by refugees from Sinai and Suez during the 1967 war.

lately at the end of 1960s, Mr. President ordered to extend water and power for them, and this how the name “Manshiet Nasser” came.
CAIRO CONTEXT
Manshiet Nasser is one of the densest areas in the world, with approximately 1,000,000 inhabitants living in 7.27 Kms. Manshiet Nasser one of the largest informal areas in Egypt, and one of the closest to Cairo, positioning in a very well located place, well connected to the center of Cairo.
PEOPLE
Population: 1,000,000 inh.
Origins: 65% adjacent districts of Historic Cairo. 35% Rural Area.
Growth: Immigration, and natural growth.

Diversification takes place on at least three levels. On the societal level, one can speak of a multitude of culture/social groups. On the group level, the multitude and intersectionally of individual belongings comes to the fore. On the individual level, the mobility of individual’s minds between different references of identification becomes a crucial element in theorizing the diverse society, limited to a certain district, as right may be personal or territorial.

displaying identity and territorially; defending a territory from intruders; “territorial behavior”; “strongly territorial birds”
Manshiet Nasser occupies a central position within Cairo, located along the base of Moqattam Hills directly east of Fatimid Cairo. The District Manshiet Nasser representing a total area of (7.27) Kms.

**Borders:**
- **West:** Al-Nasr Road & the old railway
- **North:** Tayaran Street & the old railway
- **East:** Moqattam Hills
- **South:** Moqattam Road
BORDERS - other

Borders of Manshiet Nasser could categorized to many types:

Blurry - Formal - Cognitive

what is Controversial that one border could be more than one type, by noticing the incidents in Manshiet Nasser. It also could be happened at different scales, outside and in. Diversification of incidents, which is a continuous process, gives the identity multidimensional shifting trait.

Topography become blurry border; people are in love with ascension.

Open space is a border; Deweka, above where the rockfall 2008.

The old British railway line, and a wall in front of it; in the background you can see the cemeteries (The city of dead).

Mobilizing the border, Deweka

Dangerous cliff is not blocker border for some entertainment; Deweka.

Building along autostrad (AL-Naser St.); Heights of buildings an impervious bulwark.

The end of autostrad; beside Zabbaleen district.
Diversification of identities, explaining the contrast in patterns.

Variety of factors like topography, nature of works, and the different identifications for shelter and home that represented in attempts of formal and informal to typical formalize place, are playing an essential role in terms of forming buildings typologies, streets patterns, and open spaces. Process of mobilizing becomes more dynamic and fluid to appropriate the nature of place, which could be complex enough to solve the irregular forms.
The attempts of formal and informal to typically consolidate place are separated by two growth lines; traditional pattern-led, and formal dogma. By exploring the cognitive of both formal and informal, the legitimized reality makes the best of all factors, otherwise it would have become divorced from people and place.

In the process of growth, the formal attempts to formalize the informal, and the informal perceives itself as formal. The informal takes enough time to consolidate place by the deep understanding of all factors, while the formal takes steps, rushed and intermittent, causing an informal product.
Cohesion

Built form adapts to the environment. There is strong cohesion between the built and the natural. Yet there is a constant sense of deliberate and conscious effort to overpower, to overcome, to make place. Spaces are shaped incrementally reflecting the mobility between minds in Man- shiet nasser.
Violation

Wadi Pharaon is eye witness to the continual and forceful struggle over space; the epic of conflicting territorial claims. Each cognizing the space in different terms; reflecting the divide in values and aspirations. Space becomes at once an opportunity and a denial.

October 2010

satellite image (sometime) 2010
STREETS PATTERNS
Access routes for vehicles and people on foot appear at first glance to be chaotic and nonsensical reflecting the diversity of people and place. However, when one looks deeper at the scale of everyday life, illegibility becomes common wisdom.
MOBILITY +

Manshiet Nasser...

...self-reference of IDENTIFICATION?
REFERENCES

BOOKS AND REPORTS


INTERVIEWS

Khalil Shaat, Head of the Informal Areas Unit, Cairo Governorate. October 23rd, 2010.
Shoukry Hussein, EQI. November 1st, 2010.

MAPS

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Google Earth
http://www.esrs.wmich.edu/webmap/

IMAGES

All photos by Ahmed El-Helo except one by Manuel Hertz
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