

The Impact of Urban Transformations on Changing the Urban Identity of Maspero Triangle Region in Cairo

Omar Abdelaziz. Alameddin[#], Maged Mohamad. Elmahdy, Ali Abdallah Elbially

[#]Urban Planning Department, AL-Azhar University/Faculty of Engineer College, Egypt

Abstract: Cairo was subjected to many rapid urban transformations which resulted in the growth and change of the urban areas of the city. The area of Maspero Triangle region is considered to be one of the insecure areas in Cairo Governorate. Despite the geographical location of the area and its history dating back to the Mamlukera, the region suffered from neglect. Although the fact that investors interested in developing the region acquired an estimated 75% in 2018, ISDF prepared a proposed plan for Maspero region after the completion of the removal of the residential area. The aim of this research is to evaluate the proposed plan in view of the region history and its old identity.

Keywords: Identity, Character, Urban, Maspero Triangle, Boulaq.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS RESEARCH

The importance of this research waylays in attracting the Egyptian government intention to conserve and maintain the identity of each historical region when repeat the experience of developing Maspero triangle region in other ancient areas, including the area of the Sur-Magralyoun and other historical areas inside Cairo to avoid threatening those areas' identity and its architectural character.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THIS RESEARCH

This research aims to shed light on the experience of developing one of the largest developmental projects in the heart of the Egyptian capital; Cairo by studying some of the historical identity of the region, reading and analyzing the proposed plan for the region, comparing and showing some expected effects due to expected urban and urban transformations.

III. PROBLEMATIC RESEARCH

Maspero Triangle region had been deteriorated due to lack of buildings maintenance within the area. The area suffered from the phenomenon of urban stoppage because of a governmental decision to prevent tinkering or restoration of this area. This led to an increasing the percentage of degraded buildings to about 50% of total buildings. As a second-class hazard area, due to the large number of buildings falling some buildings had been constructed from the remnants of ancient buildings. In 2014, a preliminary vision had been made for the

development of Maspero region, which included a proposed plan for the area. This proposed plan should meet urbanization needs of this region and be compatible and harmonious with the surrounding areas. This research is an attempt to declare the expected effects of the implementation of the proposed plan for Maspero region.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Identify some urban and urban transformations of Maspero triangle region by discussion of the architectural and urban nature of this area and conduction of a comparative analysis of the architectural and urban character of it. The research then moves on to develop a number of conclusions and recommendations for the proposed plan for the region.

V. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THIS RESEARCH

The theoretical framework of this research is to study the urban identity of Maspero region before the complete demolition of the area as an attempt to document vocabulary and urban components and then compare them with the area proposed plan and to show the compatibility of the expected identity of this plan with the original urban identity of the area.

VI. PREVIOUS STUDIES

In July 2014, MADD group which had consisted of young human rights volunteers and architects; carried out studies and ideas with the residents of Maspero region to develop the area and expressed their desire to communicate with the ministry as an attempt to reach a vision that meets the demands of regional development partners and the nature of the region.

In June 5 2015 it was announced that there was a desire to launch a specialized international competition for the region's re-planning project. After the competition was completed the first prize was blocked and none of the proposals were accepted.

VII. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

That the urban identity of any area may change and evolve over time but will never correspond with any new scheme for the region as long as the area was completely destroyed and

the development of the area has not been adopted progressively.

VIII. RESEARCH AXES

The research includes two main axes:

The first axis: The impact of urban transformations on Maspero triangle region in Cairo.

The second axis: Study the expected effects of the proposed plan on the urban identity of the region.

1. The first axis: The impact of urban transformations on Maspero triangle region in Cairo 1.

1.1 Location of Maspero Triangle Region

The area of Maspero triangle is located in the heart of Cairo within Boulaq Abul-Ela district within 8 districts located in the western region of Cairo Governorate. The total area of the district of Bulaq is 516 acres (2.2 km²). The total area of Maspero region is 81 acres, representing about 15.6% of Boulaq Abul-Ela district. In the north-east direction is the 26th July axis and in the south-east direction is Al-Galaa Street. In the western direction are The River Nile and The Corniche Road. In the south is Abd Al-Moneim Riyad Square. The area is similar to the Triangle and is named after Maspero Triangle[5] [6]. The area to be developed is about 51 acres.

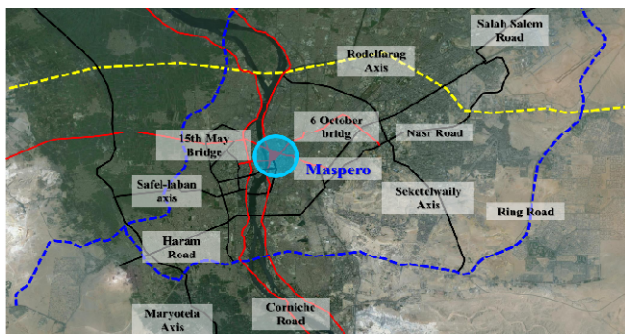


Fig. 1: The most important axes surrounding the area Maspero

Figure (1) represents Abul-Ela Maspero Triangle region and the most important site surrounding streets.

1.2 Historical Identity of the Region

Sheikh Hussein Abul-Ela Mosque; is the oldest building in Maspero triangle as it had been built in the Mamluk era, which had been restored more than once through the Committee for the Preservation of Arab Antiquities. The region was known as a part of Cairo and a separate suburb

Figure(2) illustrates the urban situation of the region in the mid-nineteenth century and the figure (4) illustrates the urban situation of the region in 2018



Fig.2: Urban status of Maspero region, mid-19th century



Fig.3: Urban situation of Maspero region, 2018

1.3 The Impact of the Second Cairo Revolution on the Historical Identity of Maspero Triangle Region

The history of this region preserved the role of this region during French campaign. Al-Jabarti clarified the role of the region in the second Cairo revolution and the resistance of the region's inhabitants to the French soldiers who attacked the Bulaq area from the sea side[1]. The French took them over and besieged them from all sides and dead people were thrown into streets and alleys. The buildings, houses and palaces were burned. The French surrounded the area and prevented its population from leaving. They took over the cells, the goods and the luggage even the women and children. After much fighting, the French committed atrocities. More than First Cairo Revolution; Abu Ghazi (2013) said that all these events created a special glory and character for the region even after the evacuation of the French campaign against Egypt in 1801[2].

1.4 The Urban Identity of the Region and its Relation to Cairo Khedive

The new planning of Ismailia (Tahrir) area southward reached the end of Al-Madabagh (Sherif) and Sulaiman Pasha

(TalaatHarb) streets and the renovation of Fuad I Street (26th July Currently) with the Azbekiya Square Planning Project as described in Figure (4).



Fig. 4: Bridge May 15th the present Alternative for Abul-Ela Bridge [5]



Fig. 5: Maspéro area before the construction of Abul-Ela Bridge



Fig. 6: Abul-Ela Bridge, one of the region's landmarks

It was the beginning of reconstruction of Bulaq suburb and the boom was the construction of Bulaq Abul-Ela Bridge, which was inaugurated during the reign of Khedive Abbas Helmy II, and the bridge was an engineering miracle to connect Cairo

and Zamalek Island, in 1998 dismantled and replaced by bridge 15th May[3].

The Urban Identity of the Area before its Removal in 2018

Many of the area's landmarks were destroyed in 1948 during the construction of the 6th October Bridge, the most important of which is the English Church and the main sewerage service, the Cairo Tram Company which was replaced by the Ramses Hilton Hotel, Boulak Veterinary Hospital and the General Hygiene Section of the Organization which was replaced by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in addition to removing tram lines that were along the Corniche Road.

The orthogonal grid pattern indicates the control of the state system and the power of governance and we can notice another kind of radiation pattern in eastern urban parts.

The urban form is dominated by the wide horizontal direction with open ends and orthogonal directions.

The urban rhythm is very boring due to the similarity of the urban nature and building patterns.

The arealimited by industrial borders like the roads surrounding the area except The River Nile which is the natural limit for the area from the west.

The area has a lot of traffic congestion points at 6th October Bridge entrance of the leading to 26th July, as well as at the inter section of the Corniche with the beginning of the 15th May Bridge leading to Zamalek. The largest traffic contract in the region is Abdel Moneim Riad area.

The most important internal traffic routes in the area are Ibn Al-Yazri Street, Al-Armenti Street and Abu Talib Street which divide the area longitudinal as well as Sharks Street and the internal roads of the area from the main streets with offers of approximately 10 meters such as Al-Yazri Street east of the area and Abul-Ela Street Which divides the area longitudinal and the street of Circassian Wastani which divides the region by a width of between 5: 6.5 m.

The region is characterized by a population of Nubians in the southern region while the northern region is a family gatherings and the region is divided into several visual districts also in the interior containing the commercial market [5].

The Second Axis: The Expected Effects of the Proposed Plan on the Region Urban Identity

Council of Ministers cooperated with all stakeholders to take actions for the sake of refinement of Maspéro Triangle Region to pay more attention to the development of informal settlements and to improve standard of living of poor people and marginalized groups in country based on the plan to complete the non-secure areas' development.

Now there is a preliminary vision preparing for the development of Maspero region.

2.1 Preparation of the Proposed Plan for Maspero Triangle Region in Partnership with the People

Meetings and dialogues were held with all groups in Maspero Triangle including parents, occupants, small owners, senior owners and investment companies to develop the region through the idea of redistribution of properties. Several principles were developed for the development of the region through several sessions and workshops with the region inhabitants. In a public conference attended by residents of the region the most important items included:

- Development in partnership with region residents.
- No forced evictions and compensation of the population according to their entitlements and the principle of social justice.
- The area is part of Cairo heart so it must reflect character, spirit and identity of the city and put inconsideration the economic value and location of it.

2.2 Procedures for the preparation of Maspero Triangle's Proposed plan

The registered buildings of the distinctive nature were enumerated and Egyptian Survey Authority was assigned an inventory of the properties in the area, Cairo Governorate to address the Supreme Council for Planning and Urban Development to declare Maspero Triangle region as re-planning area and the signing of an annex to the project to re-plan Maspero triangle region with Cairo Governorate. And take legal action and announce the call of owners and occupants to submit to Cairo Governorate and deliver documents of ownership of the region.

Figure (8) represents the public meetings of the officials with the people and with the investors.



Fig. 8: the public meetings of the officials with the people and with the investors [3]

An advisory committee was formed of architectural experts, urban planners and representatives of development partners to discuss and follow up the preparation of the development plan, study of proposals and development alternatives, and reached a preliminary vision for development based on the re-division of properties and identification of an area of housing and

investment. Through the meetings with the residents more than one strategy was presented to deal with the population to choose the optimal alternative for them to compensate them for their housing units and to choose either compensation in a rental unit in the area, compensation in a local ownership unit (With a sale ban), monetary compensation or take a unit rental Temporarily [4].

- More than 75% of the region's residents chose not to return back to the area, despite the fact that this area is characterized by unique spatial and natural features, as most of those residents do not have any ownership documents and may be afraid of leaving and could not be able to return to the area.
- The new development plan will change social and cultural identity and demographics of the region other than what will actually happen in urban change which suggests the formation of a new identity for the region that makes us look to assess the impact of these transformations on the identity of the region.

2.3 Urban Status of the Area and Its Identity after Removal

In the beginning of 2019 the residential area in the area of Maspero Triangle was demolished as a prelude to its development.

Figures(9 and 10) represent the current situation of Maspero Triangle, and the residential buildings of the residents who wish to return back to the same area as in the Figure.

Maspero metro station of the third regional line of Greater Cairo (Imbaba - Airport) is being constructed.



Fig. 9: The current situation of Masperoregion[6]

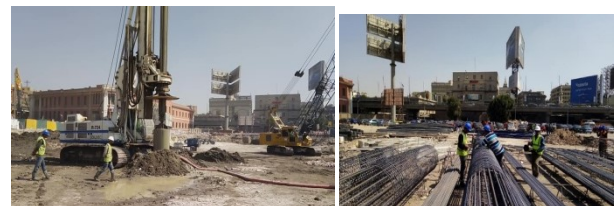





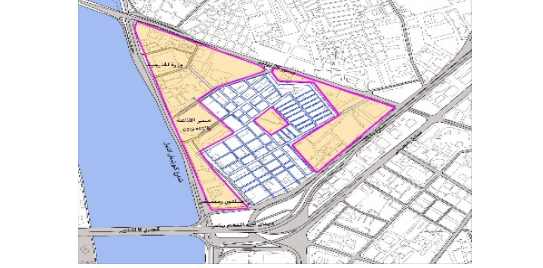


Fig. 10: The current construction area in Maspero

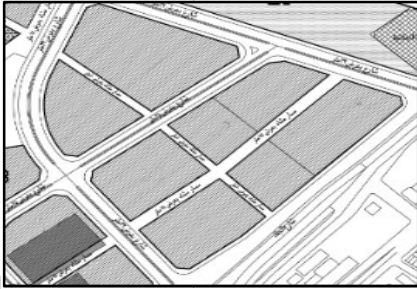
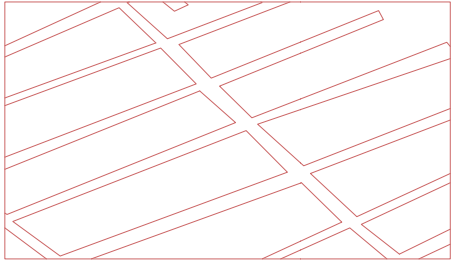




2.4 Comparison of Urban Identity of Maspero Triangle Area with the Expected Urban Identity after Development.



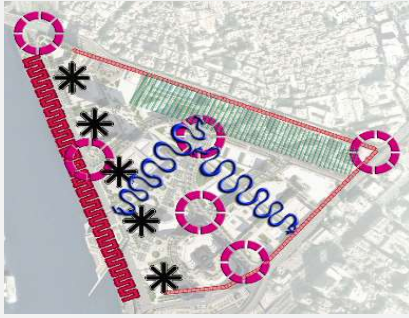


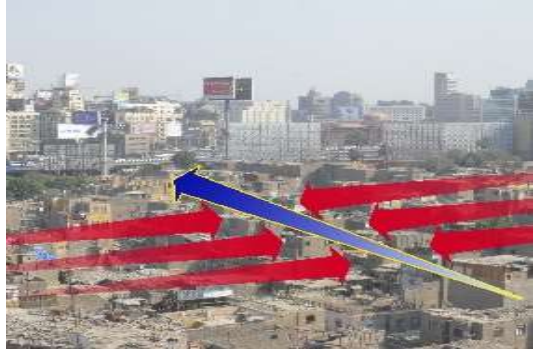
A number of elements and vocabularies of the urban identity have been identified. The following table (1) represents a

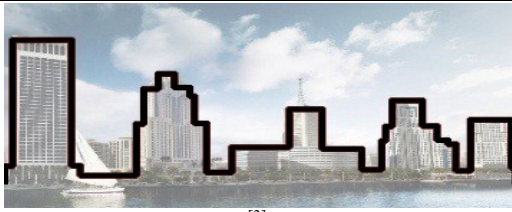
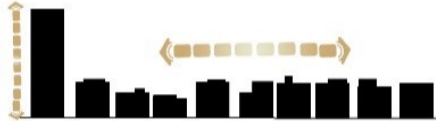

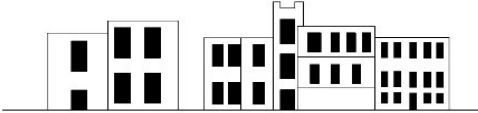
comparison of the urban identity of Maspero Triangle with the expected urban identity after implementation of the proposed plan

Table 1: Comparison of the Urban Identity of Maspero Triangle Area with the Expected Urban Identity after Implementation of the Proposed Plan

Elements	Proposed Plan of Maspero Triangle	Triangle of Maspero before 2019
Relationship to Neighboring Regions	 <p>[3]</p>	 <p>[3]</p>
Description	<p>The project is based on development of Maspero Triangle region only and there is no comprehensive view of all the region's development and surroundings.</p>	<p>The region was one of the suburbs separated from the capital and then Khedive Ismail linked the area between the center of country and the studied area during his rule through several axes of movement as well as linking them to Zamalek island through Abul-Ela Bridge.</p>
Urban Pattern [7]	 <p>[3]</p>	
Description	<p>Observe the absence of the idea of the region distinctive urban layout and note that the goal of the project is to make economic use of the site without a vision to take advantage of the historical background, cultural dimensions and distinctive urban identity.</p>	<p>The region has a distinctive Urban pattern through buildings and architectural blocks as well as streets, narrow corridors and lanes. The geometric pattern of the region represents a quadratic method, which is the basic network governing the mechanism of thought and distribution of units in the region</p>
Character [8]	 <p>[3]</p>	

<p>Description</p>	<p>The proposed plan for the area is characterized by the western architectural style and it is clear that it is influenced by non-Arab architectural and architectural ideas. This helps to create a new identity for the area different from the old area's identity so is not compatible with the surrounding areas and Omran city of Cairo in general.</p>	<p>The physical dimension of the region urban nature is the occurrence of the region in the middle of downtown Cairo and it overlooks Nile and is linked to the main traffic arteries. Also, there are many buildings of poor condition and others of a distinctive architectural nature but they are not registered in the heritage buildings and they lack maintenance.</p>
<p>Styles, Shapes and Sizes of Plots</p>	 <p>[3]</p>	
<p>Description</p>	<p>The proposed plots are very large areas ranging from 7000 to 15000 m², varied shapes, sizes and asymmetrical mostly rectangles of irregular proportions, Five-sided shape and another shapes consisting of lines and parts of circles.</p>	<p>The area consists of large tracts of land that were divided into smaller pieces and built on the entire area, ranging from 800 to 1000 m². The most of land was formed of rectangles with proportions 3:1 in the south-east and shapes with semi-square dimensions in the rest of the area.</p>
<p>Street Grid System[9]</p>		 <p>ZZ</p>
<p>Description</p>	<p>There is no relationship between the proposed street network and adjacent areas.</p>	<p>It shows the layout of the orthogonal square streets on the region and adjacent areas and the appearance of the remnants of radiation planning.</p>
<p>Pedestrian Plan[10]</p>	 <p>منطقة جميع حركة المشاة مسار مشاة رئيسي مسار مشاة رئيسي منطقة جميع حركة المشاة</p>	

Description	The layout is based on a major pedestrian axis and a secondary pedestrian axis but it is difficult to communicate the region parts because of the presence of car routes that divide the project in both horizontal and vertical directions.	The infantry movement in the area depends on the main axis of Sultan Abul-Ela Street that located in the northern part of the area and the axis of Abu Talib as a longitudinal axis interspersed with infantry axes with offers less than 5 m.
Urban Scene		
Description	European character is the proposed visual characterization. Most spaces in between are longitudinal. Characterized by the presence of strong visual axes and a distinctive visual sequence.	The region suffers from weak visual configuration and the area is dominated by dilapidated buildings, simple facades and poor rundown roofs.
Visual Study		
Description	Ali Baba Cinema was demolished and a number of buildings were built on Nile Corniche. Residents wishing to return to the region will be resettled in the eastern region. The region has a new identity by separating the indigenous people of the area from other areas of housing in the area.	Distinguished marks are represented at Ramses Hilton Hotel, Radio and Television Building, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abul-Ela Mosque, The Italian consulate, Ali Baba Cinema and Vehicle Museum. It is noted that most of the signs are located on Nile Corniche and the axis of 26 th July.
Urban Spaces		

Description	There is a gradient in the shapes and sizes of spaces but these spaces lack communication because of the Proposed plan adoption on streets dedicated to cars.	The longitudinal and transverse streets determine the directions of movement to and from the area. The area does not show the idea of traditional spaces in Arabic city.
Sky Line		
Description	All areas have a vertical skyline especially in the Nile-looking areas as an attempt to have benefit from the distinguished location.	All areas have a horizontal skyline except for the high buildings on Nile Corniche, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Radio and Television Building and Hilton Ramses.
Doors and Windows		
Description	Most of the openings are square openings for windows and most of the materials are made of glass and occupy 20-35% of architectural façades area and take the European styles.	Large long openings for doors and windows that occupy large areas of architectural façades, and also characterized by high ceilings that give the region a distinctive architectural character for the period before the revolution of July 1952.
Evaluation of Identity Formation Elements		
	Proposed Plan of Maspero Triangle	Maspero Triangle before 2019
Geographical Location and Topography	Compatible	Not compatible at all
Address Climate and Environmental Conditions	Not compatible at all	Not compatible
Social Relations	Not compatible at all	Compatible
Create a Demographic Composition Associated with the Project	Average	Compatible
Involve the Population in Planning	Average	Not compatible
The plan is in Line with the Urban Environment and the Historic Urban Layout of the Area	Average	Compatible
The Human Scale	Not compatible at all	Compatible
The Impact of the Project on Reducing Traffic Pressure on Neighboring Areas	Not compatible	Not compatible
Communication and Project Parts Integration	Not compatible	Compatible
Formation and Configuration of the Project	Compatible	Not compatible
Planning Pedestrian Traffic	Compatible	Not compatible at all
The Urban Addition of the City (and its Relation to the Distinctive Shape of the Urban City)	Not compatible	Not compatible
The Architectural Addition of the Area (Architectural Excellence)	Not compatible	Not compatible at all
The Historical Heritage of the Region	Not compatible at all	Not compatible at all
The Project Coincides with Surrounding Area	Not compatible at all	Compatible

To Take into Account the Ideological Values and Arab Traditions	Not compatible at all	Not compatible
Affected by Political Circumstances	Compatible	Not compatible
Expected Economic Impact	Very compatible	Not compatible at all
The Social Organization Impact	Not compatible at all	Compatible
The Distinctive Urban Fabric of the Arab City	Not compatible at all	Not compatible
Use of Local Building Materials	Not compatible at all	Compatible
Scientific Development and Technology	Very compatible	Not compatible at all

IX. CONCLUSION

Although many hearings have been held with the residents, the plan agreed upon with the residents of the area will not be taken as the majority of the population is persuaded to leave the area and choose cash compensation or move to the Asmrat area in Mokattam.

The project is concerned with achieving the highest economic benefits from the region and creating more economic opportunities for the residents whom were suffering from lack of connection between them and the surrounding axes. Cairo downtown may lack such a center of business, but the excessive concentration of these elements may not encourage the transfer of financial center and business to that region.

The proposed plan did not benefit from the area importance or its history and did not achieve the goal sought by many of the consultants and planners to make the region a distinctive milestone for Cairo city and expressed it, but was the proposed scheme (just an architectural project fit to be placed in any Arab or Western city).

The absence of Arab and Egyptian characteristic features of the project did not take inconsideration the history or present to make a distinctive urban future for the heart of Cairo.

The project is expected to create a nucleus for new traffic congestion, despite the difficulties in the region due to its presence in the area of convergence of Cairo traffic arteries; the most important of which is the axis of October Bridge, Al-Galaa Street, 15th May Bridge, Corniche Road and 26th July Road. However, the proposed plan has not been adequately explored or even added a new docking area to the region because of its proposal for a number of streets that would encourage transit across the region.

The project separated the proposed area of population return parallel to 26th July axis and the rest of the project and also created a number of separate zones although the region has

been famous since its integration and being a single entity. The designated entrances are entered into the area and the internal streets intersect to prevent transit and to reduce traffic congestion within the area.

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