

Research Article

Urban Segregation and its development within the Urban Fabric of Cairo

Hend Elsayed Hussein^{†*} and Heba Mohamed Nessem[‡]

[†]Architecture, Faculty of Fine Arts, Helwan University, Cairo, Egypt

[‡]Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Mataria, Helwan University, Cairo, Egypt

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Abstract

Urbanization refers to population shift from rural to urban areas, "the gradual increase in the population of people living in urban areas" and the ways in which each society adapts to change. Based on that, there are many aspects that have changed as a result of this urbanization, both at the rural level or urban level; like) urban inclusion, centralization, densification, and urban segregation). Egypt witnessed a radical transformation in urbanization after its transformation from the royal system to the republican system; therefore, there are many manifestations of the shift to urbanization manifested in the fabric of Egyptian urbanization. In this paper, emphasis will be placed on the issue of segregation and the history of its inception from the Fatimid era to the present day (Gated Communities), and discuss the reasons for the occurrence of this type of community isolation.

Keywords: Segregation, Urban development, Gated communities, urban fabric, consolidation of segregation.

1. Introduction

At the last time, Urban Segregation has become one of the most important subjects on the field of urbanization. Social-Spatial Segregation has seemed to be referring to the idea of the separation of certain social groups within the space of societies. It can be considered as a consequence or manifestation of social relations that are established and based on social structure, stratification, rules and conduct codes in place then. In the fact, urban segregation expresses the large concentration of a social group in a certain city area. Segregation is a complex social phenomenon, with many different dimensions.

In Cairo metropolitan area, the urban growth patterns reveal a fragmented city of heterogeneous parts. We can see the city as a series of small islands isolated from one another by strong physical barriers. Walls, highways, flyovers, military sites, abandoned waterfronts, parking lots and vacant lands all contribute to a city that is characterized by a fundamental lack of cohesion. More, there is no public realm that accommodates different communities. Rather, each social group is confined to a separate enclave.

Therefore, this research attempts to study the meaning of segregation and its developments form in Cairo along the different history periods, up to spread the gated communities as a new shape of social isolating.

2. Segregation

The term 'segregation' may seem to refer to a self-explanatory phenomenon that requires no definition, for the social division of territory has existed in all cities and villages since remote times in history. A more careful look, however, allows us to note that every social division of space express forms of segregation and that the use of this term as a concept depends on the theory adopted to explain the phenomenon.

In most contemporary literature on the subject of segregation, there are many different definitions of it. According to Olsson Hort, segregation as a concept includes a certain level of social hierarchy between different sections of the population. Segregation defines borders between groups and placing. Wetine (1999,59) emphasizes that segregation stands for a separation from the whole. Segregation exists within many different areas such as the labour market, education systems, athletics and recreation, health care, transportation systems as well as within the housing market. However, the concept is related to a spatial differentiation where housing is a key component for many of the other areas, as well (Wetine, 1999).

*Corresponding author's ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1641-0509
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"Segregation itself is not the problem," Goodman said. The issue with segregation is its effect on the societies. In all historical periods, each social structure built in a city has somehow reflected physical formation of that city. (Nalkaya, 2006).

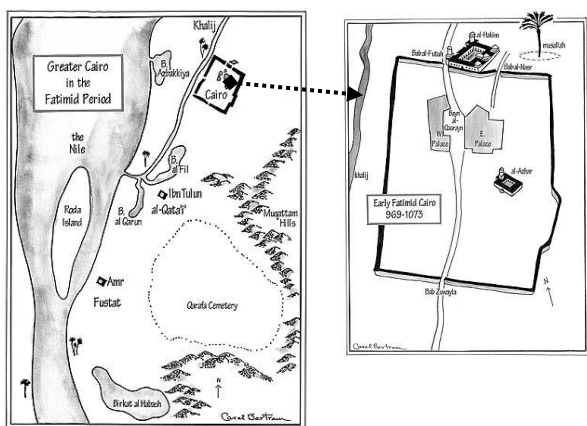
In every city or region certain types of segregation are shown between poor and rich, between ethnic groups, between young and old, and many different types of segregation are consisting in one city according to social economic level, social education level, and other social life aspects.

In Egypt there is accommodates different communities, each social group is confined to a separate enclave. The social division of urban space and the discontinuities of urban development have produced sharp socio-economic and cultural differences in Cairo.

3. Segregation history of Cairo

Cairo constitutes the urban center of Egypt. It has experienced numerous transformations, which have shaped its social and spatial structure in the course of its long history. A complex urban structure exists, which bears the imprint of different phases of development. Urban segregation has been a continual feature of Cairo's history.

- Fatimid Cairo (969) was a walled-city exclusively established for the ruling elite.
- In the Ottoman period (1517-1798), a Hara, mainly a gated residential quarter, was the basic urban unit of the city. Poor harat were located on the peripheries, while the wealthy bourgeois could be found in the centre.
- In the Mamluk period, emirs would cluster around the outskirts of the city and surrounded their houses with gardens to segregate themselves from the citizens.
- The Khedivial city (1869), which was intended mainly for foreigners and wealthy Egyptians, was erected on vacant land west of the old city.



Greater Cairo in the Fatimid period 969 – 1073 (drawn by Carel Bertram)

Through thus, we are able to emphasize the existence of the idea of separating the rich and poor classes in

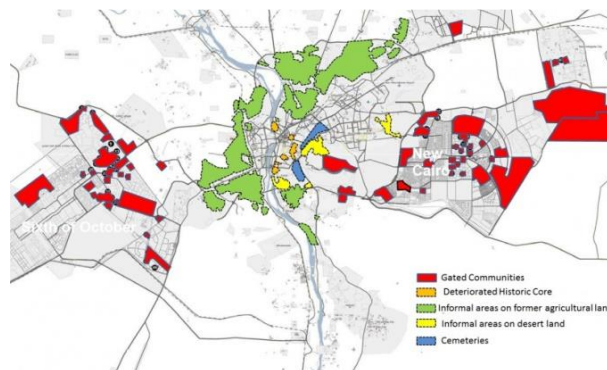
Egypt for many centuries. By studying the Cairo's long history it becomes clear that, the city had a cracked urban structure, where fractures over many centuries have been etched into its physical memory. A cursory look at the more recent history of Cairo reveals that these fractures have persisted into the modern day.

4. New cities and Segregation form

From the mid-sixties and the proposal to establish new urban communities, and began with the first steps of urban isolation, because some of this new communities were meant to be purely residential, while others were to be large industrial cities. The urban segregation did not stop at the spatial separation of communities, but they were plagued from a hierarchical and divisive organizational layout, with clear segregation between high, middle and low-income groups. For example, Tenth of Ramadan is characteristic of this dynamic, divided as it is into three distinct class-segregated districts (for the upper class, lower class and skilled working class respectively)

5. Gated Communities and Consolidation of Segregation

Over the last few decades economic policies have contributed to the rise of elite gated communities, mainly located on the fringes of the Greater Cairo Region in the new urban communities of New Cairo and Sixth of October. Gated communities have attracted a burgeoning class of extravagantly wealthy Egyptians who have voluntarily isolated themselves from the rest of Cairo's citizenry. In a bid to avoid the crowd and to have privacy and security, residents of these gated compounds have developed 'trans-spatial' relations.



Spatial distribution of different areas in Cairo

Walls, fences and barren desert have isolated this prestigious group from the city and from the wider community. This has had the effect of accentuating a 'them and us' dichotomy and in turn reinforcing social exclusion in the city at large.

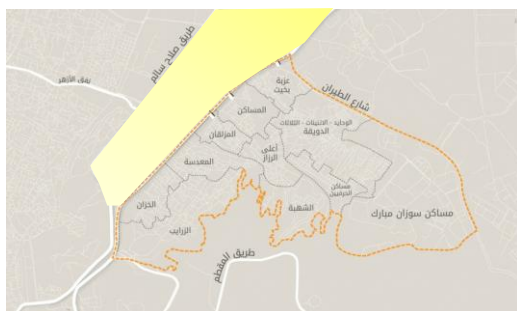
6. Segregated communities

Cairo has become, or maybe has always been, a fragmented urban fabric. The social division of urban space and the discontinuities of urban development had produced sharp socio-economic and cultural differences in Cairo. Social segregation comes as one of the phenomena that have a negative impact on social life in the city like denies people their basic right to the city and:

- Pushing poor people to the periphery and brought about a mushrooming of vacant and underused lands in the urban core.
- Emergence of many informal areas is completely separate from its wider urban contexts because of, rising house prices within gated communities have led to the exploitation of rural migrants and seeking job opportunities to gather in less desirable locations.

For Example

1. The informal settlement of Mansheit Nasser is in close proximity to downtown Cairo, while segregated from the urban core by the strong physical barriers of Autostrad expressway, cemeteries (The City of The Dead) and Salah Salem Road respectively. In this instance, geography of hilly land has created a labyrinth-like street network with frequent dead-ends



The physical barriers which contributed to the isolation of Mansheit Nasser

www.tadamun.co/?post_type=city&p=7656#.WkTnyN8jTIX

2. Ezbet Al-Nasr area which is located at the intersection of the freeways of the Autostrad and the Ring Road. Here cemeteries and vacant lands surround the settlement, isolating it from its surroundings.



https://issuu.com/iusd.cairo/docs/iusd-integrated_case_study_2013-ezz/30

Conclusion

- Egypt suffers from a defect in the urban fabric resulting from many of the political changes that have taken place in the country. These changes have resulted in urban phenomena that had an impact on the social level within the Egyptian society
- Segregation is one of the phenomena of political changes in Egypt, and it began since the beginning of the siege of Cairo in the Fatimid era, and then followed by a lot of assertions on class separation among members of society.
- The emergence of new urban communities, and their division into residential or industrial communities led to the emphasis on the phenomenon of separation of socialites. Until this chapter became within the same society according to the economic hierarchy.
- Consolidation of social stratification principle due to the spread of gated communities that aim to isolate a certain class of people within it according to a certain economic level.
- The emergence of many negative effects as a result to segregation.

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