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**Refugee Setting and Urban Form and Governance**  
**The Predicament of Syrian Refugees in Navigating**  
**Cairo's Urban Spaces and the Complexities**  
**of Governance in Turbulent Times**

A Thesis submitted in the Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the Degree

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# Disclaimer

**This dissertation is submitted to Ain Shams University, Faculty of Engineering and University of Stuttgart, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning for the degree of Integrated Urbanism and Sustainable Design.**

**The work included in this thesis was carried out by the author in the Year 2013**

**The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.**

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**Signature**



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## **Abstract**

This paper looks at the ways in which the recently arriving Syrian refugees negotiate their ways through the capital metropolis of Cairo. It examines refugee spaces through extensive field engagement with a wider look into the socio-political organization of the city and the regional, country-wide and local dynamics of change and political settings. Cairo has its own particular characteristics for refugees with its huge scale, urban compositions and fragmented and contested spaces. It provides multi-choice avenues and offers various prospects of asylum experience. However, it marginalizes the poor and positions them into vulnerable assistance and protection structures yet teaches them survival strategies. Spaces of refuge are products of physical structures and dynamic relationships, flows, sensations and embody convoluted meanings and aspirations. They are further incited by the formal and informal political, economic, social and psychological attitudes of the organization of city spaces. They result from a complex interplay of push and pull factors that are related to the socio-economic and political background of refugees and to the variety of experiences that the city offers. Refugees cluster around certain commonalities, form communities and move from-to and within the city in search of better options. The humanitarian concern of refugees' protection seems to have been much affected by local social settings and politics in a contrasted way in between three paradigmatic urban spaces: a gated city, a remote housing project and an informal settlement. These urban spaces show mechanisms of the provision of assistance and protection to refugees that are pertinent to their modes of governance. Cairo's future as a place of refuge with the turbulences it is undergoing today seems to have multiple scenarios, yet for the Syrians, it is uncertain and vague and is connected to predictions on the country's future political stability.



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## **List of Acronyms**

ENA	Emergency Needs Assessment
GCR	Greater Cairo Region
GoE	Government of Egypt
GoG	Government of Giza
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISUU	Informal Settlement Upgrading Unit
JNA	Joint Needs Assessment between UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NGO	Non- government Organisation
NUCA	New Urban Communities Administration
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PSTIC	Psycho- Social Training Institute for Cairo
SC	Save the Children
RRP	Regional Response Plan
TCR	Third Country Resident
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WDR	World Disaster Report
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

## **Transliteration to English of the names of urban spaces:**

Al U'bur	العبور
Rehab	الرحاب
Sitta October	سنة أكتوبر
Omraneya	العمرانية
Ard el Liwa	أرض اللوا
Haram and Faisal	الهرم وفيصل
Masaken Othman	مساكن عثمان





# Chapter 1

## Introduction to Background, Objectives and Methodological Framework,

*"The traveller stops and comes back full of doubt: he cannot distinguish between the different places of the city, his own mental categories get mixed up." Italo Calvino Les villes invisibles (cited in Dorai 2010)*



## **1.1 Preface**

I had never imagined that one day I would be conducting research of this nature; using my background in urban studies to understand Cairo's urban forms and modes of governance in response to recent influxes of refugees. In addition, it is very difficult to accept the fact that these refugees are my country's people, my friends and acquaintances from Syria. The research theme and proposal were developed while I was involved in volunteer outreach work with groups of Syrian refugees in Cairo, after returning from the first year of my Master's course in Germany with a strong drive to do something tangible in response to the crisis of my country. Detachment from the cause seemed almost impossible and conducting research on my initial proposal on "modernity" was not practical given the time I was spending working with the refugees. Thus, I took the decision to research a much more personally meaningful topic; the situation of Syrian refugees in Cairo-as a situation I could feel, indeed experience on a personal level. Consequently, I went through a deep transformative experience of constantly questioning my own identity and place in Cairo while navigating the city looking through the lens of a "refugee". At the same time, having in mind the turmoil of the ongoing conflict which had caused the exodus of these people from the country is not only sad, worrying and depressing. I found it extremely demanding on both humanitarian and academic levels to cope with the constant dramatic changes and the living nature of the research. I have tried very hard to be objective, but due to my intimate understanding of and feeling for the subject matter, subjectivity is inescapable. Undoubtedly, this research has been a huge and very meaningful learning experience.

The research will try to bring the discourses of urban perspectives and refugee studies into conjunction in an empirical-led way. It will examine the ways in which the Syrian refugees are navigating their ways in the city of Cairo at the present time and their relationships to different city settings, actors and agencies. It will also look at the specific implications of the current political and economic unrest in Cairo on the refugees' setting and livelihoods.

## **1.2 Background of the Problem**

With the violent crisis in Syria, forcibly uprooted persons are fleeing to neighbouring and nearby countries in huge numbers. Camps have been set on the borders of Turkey, Iraq and Jordan, but it is the cities and smaller towns in these countries, and in Egypt and Lebanon, that are accommodating the majority of the

fleeing groups (UNHCR 2013). It is expected that around four million refugees would have left their countries by end of 2013 and more than 77% of them are accommodated in cities (UN Media 2013; UNHCR internal paper 2013). The phenomenon of seeking sanctuary in cities is widespread, as more refugees from all conflicts are deliberately targeting urban areas (WDR 2012). Seemingly, worldwide, the percentage of urban refugees to total refugees was assumed to have exceeded 50% in 2012, a percentage which has definitely risen in the current Syrian crisis (ibid.). Migration through displacement is accelerating urbanization processes and cities in the global south are increasingly receiving internally displaced persons (IDPs), economic migrants and refugees in capitals, megacities, peri-urban areas and secondary cities (WDR 2012; IDMC 2011).

Camps are sometimes a necessity, but not a natural social structure," says UNHCR staff member in Jordan referring to the multi-choice avenues and less harsh lives of refugee experience in cities (Shearlaw 2013). Urban areas offer anonymity, livelihood opportunities, freedom of movement and access to better services, safety and reassurance in numbers and the solidarity between groups of refugees and further proximity to power brokers (Kobia and Cranfield 2009; Haysom 2013). Camps, however, remain the well defined spaces and logistically easier for humanitarian community to operate in (Shearlaw 2013). There are also push factors to camp confinement; the lack of capacity and the inefficiency of the humanitarian community to afford the costs of camps and the fear of host governments of big concentrations of refugees- these all contribute to increasing numbers of urban refugees (Feedback: Misselwitz 2013). Nonetheless, as marginalization of refugees' livelihoods and spaces has been the fashion in most global south countries (Grabska 2006), cities offer the chance to mitigate and to some degree circumvent these restrictions and to develop coping strategies. The making of Refugees' communities contributes to mitigating their feelings of exile and isolation which are manifested in diverse ways; places of shared belonging and identity, collective livelihood strategies and self organized political and other structures (Minnick 2009).

Here, the refugees' expectations of the city are in many ways identical to those of ordinary migrants from the rural hinterlands which fuel informal urbanization processes in the Global South. The urban "gateways", "estuaries" and "arrival cities" which are the physical receptacles for the newly-established communities of rural migrants and refugees alike bear many socio-economic and political characteristics which make them urban laboratories for understanding the city's functions in response to influxes of refugees and migrants (Saunders 2011



; Landau 2012 ). The complex relationships they build with their countries of origin, and other same city geo-political spheres are sources of strength and help develop their understanding of the city's forms and functions (ibid.). Therefore, investigating refugee spaces within the city's framework should include consideration of the scale of these geographies as interconnected across wide areas and yet focus on locally contrived political and socio-economic structures and their influence on the different humanitarian concerns of refugees (Landau 2012).

Discussing refugees' rights in the international and national legislative frameworks is a key step to examining their situations in a given city and a given country. Refugees' protection is one central concern for all actors involved in refugees context and their rights to protection, freedom to movement and settlement have been discussed through series of conventions/protocols and policy documents (UN 1951; UNHCR 2009). The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) (2009) policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas is a reference for the examination of "humanitarian concepts" in "urban settings" and in light of urban politics and will form an important part of this paper (Chapters 5 and 6). The provision of assistance from the humanitarian community in urban areas could be a pull factor to cities by itself as Crisp (2010) contends. Yet, the mechanisms of that provision and the reaching out of refugees and meeting their needs remain challenging and call for new strategies (Zetter and Deikun 2011).

In Cairo, a mega metropolis and centrally located city in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), haven has been provided for thousands of African and Middle Eastern refugees in the past, and more recently to over 100,000 Syrians (Zohry 2003; UNHCR 2013; Primary data 2013). Its history as a place of refuge calls for a deeper look into the characteristics that affect asylum and displacement experiences. Cairo has been examined from different angles in various studies of refugees and has been bounced between dichotomies of transitory and final destination; cosmopolitan attitudes and evidence of heightened levels of xenophobia (Al Sharmani and Grabaska2011; Grabska 2006; Zohry 2003). Refugees in Cairo are confronted by legal and social marginalization through the 'non-existence of national asylum policies and discrimination against outsiders in general' (Grabska 2006). The informal sectors in the city have substituted and catered for many refugees who are restricted, either by law or by local objection, from entering formal avenues of employment (Danielson 2012). In resorting to different coping strategies, refugees fall into cycles of wider marginalization (Grabska 2006). However, they learn survival strategies from the urban poor

who share these spaces and prospects of bettering their lives with the refugees (ibid.).

To grasp the functions of the city organization in response to refugees, an understanding of how the city functions, on its own terms, is necessary before examining the particularities of the refugee experience. There are numerous urban studies of Cairo that discuss the multiple aspects of its urban life. This paper will look at certain angles only; for example, provision of shelter and accommodation and the current housing situation in the city which have a direct impact on options for refugees. Furthermore, the city's modes of urban governance and the competing sovereignties of its urban spaces influence refugees' settings and protection mechanisms will be discussed. The ongoing unrest and the huge political and economic transformations make its urban setting and prospects 'much more unpredictable than previously, especially given the refugees' vulnerability'. Refugees in post revolutionary Cairo have been suffering from hardening of their lives, discrimination, evictions from homes and xenophobic attitudes (Khallaf 2012). These have recently been compounded many times and are still reoccurring since the July 3rd shift of political power. For the Syrian refugees, the current turbulence has a profound impact on their lives and prospects as they are uncertain, waiting to see where political waves put them (Michael and Rizk 2013). Their vulnerabilities are overburdened by hate speech, intimidation by the Egyptian public media and the cut-down of many support channels, and most importantly, by the newly-emerged need of legal protection through the restrictions on residency and entry visas (HRW 2013). However, for this paper, the field work was accomplished by end of May 2013 and the political changes took place while writing the final draft and hence only few comments regarding that were included where possible.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

In the urban environments of Cairo where Syrian refugees are dispersed, the ways in which these refugees negotiate their ways through the city and the relationships they establish with city residents, actors and agencies and their country of origin is vital for planning and development of policies and operational response programmes. However, there is a specific lack in the current body of urban studies that focuses on the conjunctions of humanitarian concerns within urban frameworks (Landau 2012). There is also a challenging conceptual and methodological approach to correlating the sophisticated and refined urban literature within humanitarian and refugees' realms (ibid.). The direct effect of

local political structures and modes of governance in such a city of fragmented urban spaces is not yet well understood and there is a tendency (among humanitarian and refugee studies) to deal with Cairo in a generalized and simplistic way.

Given that background, this paper seeks to examine the situation of Syrian refugees within the city of Cairo showing a variety of refugee spaces and drawing links between these spaces, modes of governance and refugee protection, and other humanitarian concerns within an understanding of the framework of the city's modes of urbanization and a brief discussion on potential future scenarios.

This paper also seeks to offer a perspective on the close and complex relationships that the city, refugees' spaces, modes of governance and protection of refugees have with each other.

It will further try to refine the current assumptions and abstract categorizations of the relationships in between the two study areas (refugees vs urban) by direct examination of these relationships in three urban spaces in Cairo; an informal settlement, a gated city and an exclusionary housing project through examining specific protection concerns as defined by UNHCR. This definition on a local level has been the direct consequences of how these concerns are being recalibrated with modes of governance and reproduced in a different setting (See figure 1. for thesis framework).

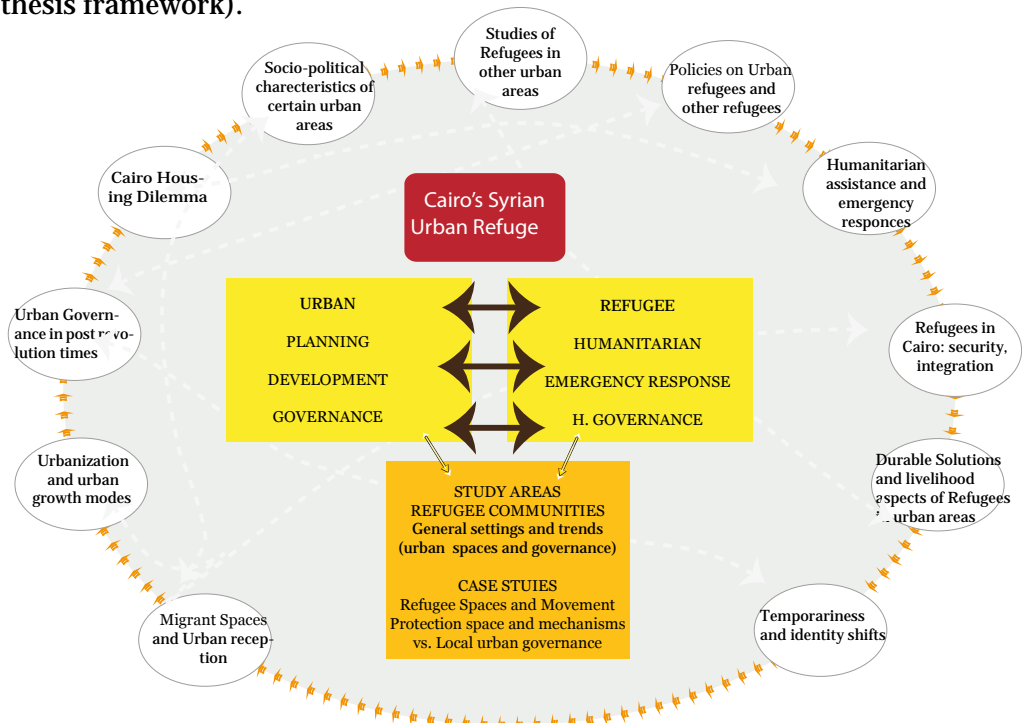


Figure1. Thesis Conceptual Framework

The research aims at filling gaps in the information discussed earlier through its 'real time' nature, immediate involvement on the ground and documentation of refugees' journeys and settlement stories. It will attempt to bridge and synthesize some aspects of the 'urban' discourse with the 'refugee' one in hopes of improving both. The research could provide some insight into working with refugees in general and into the current turmoil of Syrian refugees in particular as many parts of its documentation process are benchmarks for organizations working with refugees.

In order to realize the objectives of the research, primary and secondary sets of questions have been put forward. These questions have both descriptive and explanatory natures.

- How do refugees interact with the city's urban spaces?
  - What are the urban spaces in which the Syrian refugees are being accommodated; in which urban forms?
  - Where have they started to formulate communities?
  - What are the reasons behind the voluntary and involuntary choices of places of settlement?
  - In which ways are they dispersed within a specific area?
  - What changes or impact on urban form and use could be observed?
  - What intra-city journeys do they make and for what reasons?
- How are refugees' settings influenced by the formal political structures of Cairo in the post- revolution era?
  - What is the general city-wide map of actors in the Syrian refugees' context?
  - What kinds of relationships do they have between themselves, and with the authorities and how does that influence their options to organize themselves?
- How do urban modes of governance (informal governance) influence refugees' settings in specific urban spaces?
  - How does urban governance in three paradigmatic urban forms influence Refugee protection?
- What lessons could be derived for the city of Cairo?

## **1.4 Research Methodology**

The research which forms the basis for this paper is exploratory, descriptive and explanatory in nature. As these types are not mutually exclusive, the research has been directed towards describing the phenomenon of refugees in urban areas, documenting parts of their journeys and the ways in which they negotiate their ways through the city and explaining the reasons and factors behind movements, settlement and the protection mechanisms and relationships to agencies and actors (Preece 1994). It also entailed a desktop review of literature related to urban and refugee studies. It is evidence-led through the case study of Cairo and specific urban spaces within the city (see the following section for the selection of specific case studies). It introduces some comparative elements, specifically between the selected urban spaces and other urban settings. Comparison is not the intention, but it is a helpful tool in articulating the discussions and bringing about deeper insights.

The study started by looking at the city and its refugee inhabitants from a wide angle in an attempt to document and build up a body of knowledge on the general picture and then to identify areas of focus and in-depth analysis. This process has been very demanding on an empirical level, and, as the situation developed, further entailed a lot of revision and restructuring of the study.

### **1.4.1 Selection of Case Studies**

Three urban spaces were selected for deeper examination of modes of informal governance. They are places where Syrians have formulated communities representing urban forms and modes of citizenship with the added value of accessibility to information. Sitta October is undoubtedly the space where the influence of refugee influxes is most evident, as it is the area which accommodates the highest concentration of Syrian refugees. The urban spaces of the exclusionary housing project of Masaken Othman, the informal settlement of Omraneya and Rehab gated city were taken as representing three paradigmatic urban forms to look into following the urban modes of citizenship which have been discussed as extreme (Al Sayyad and Roy 2009). The exclusionary housing project is actually not part of these forms but was included in the research due to its obvious significance in accommodation of large numbers of refugees.

### **1.4.2 Data Collection Methods**

The research has involved a wide range of data collection and information gathering methods. The empirical data have been generated through extensive field visits and research in the areas where Syrian refugees and few other refugee

communities live in Cairo. The researcher has been engaged in working with the Syrian refugees since October 2012 and thus there have been structured and un-structured methods of obtaining the data:

#### **1.4.2.1 Structured Methods of Obtaining Data and Information**

There are two levels of obtaining data:

##### **a. City-wide Level:**

The research looked at the general scope of Cairo for the set of the research questions which are related to the Syrian refugees' places of settlement, economic activities, making of communities and effect or changes in the use of urban spaces (as in Sitta October Satellite City), and city-wide level of governance; actors, service providers, real estate agents and community leaders; the kinds of relationships among them and the variety of services and assistance offered to the refugees. This part has engaged the following data collection methods and it fed into the sets of questions 1, 3 and 4:

- Semi-Structured Interviews: Interviews were conducted with broader, city-wide actors and the choice of interviewees followed an eclectic approach, whereby the most important informants were selected from the diverse actors working in the Syrian context. The main actors who were interviewed:
  - Local Syrian Structures: there are a few city wide structures, most of the newly established local structures are situated in Sitta October
  - Migration and Refugee Specific Actors
  - Real estate agents in the three districts,
  - City-wide urban activists and historians,
  - A few non-Syrian refugee community actors,

##### **b. Case-Studies (three urban spaces)**

- Semi-Structured interviews with urban administration in the three case studies: Omraneya district administration, Giza and Omraneya Informal Settlement Upgrading Unit, New Cairo Urban Administration, Rehab Management Company (City Hall) and Sitta October District (HAI) which is part of the New Urban Communities Administration (NUCA)
- Household questionnaires were conducted in the three areas of study (Masaken Othman, Omraneya and Rehab)

The Sampling strategy: The questionnaire variables were area-specific with one variable which intended to give a broader idea on the general influence of different push/pull factors (see list of variables in Appendix 2). Within two areas; Othman and Omraneya, a snowball strategy was considered (Smith 2005). In Rehab, questionnaires were handed out to passers-by next to the food court where Syrians gather as the researcher was not permitted by the city administration to conduct household visits. The total numbers of population was obtained from local charity associations, urban administration in Rehab and from the public. Questionnaires were conducted with 9 respondents in Masaken Othman, 9 in Rehab and 9 in Omraneya. The questionnaire variables were specific to the urban experiences the refugees had lived in their areas of origin and current accommodation besides their journeys, opinions on the lived space and connections to charity or other organizations.

- Observations formed a very important source of information and some observations were done periodically in specific areas to monitor change in the built environment,
- Descriptive statistics and information obtained from UNHCR and other organizations,
- Desktop research of the contextual picture and the general regional and city-wide scales of migration, displacement and their relationships to national and international legislations on Refugees. The vast literature on refugee protection, services, livelihoods in urban environments, and urban aspects of Cairo and its structures of governance in specific urban spaces was reviewed, with a wider look at case studies around the global south.

#### **1.4.2.2 Unstructured Methods of data collection**

The researcher's contribution to an assessment of the Syrian Refugees situation in Cairo for Save the Children and her further involvement through being one of the "key informants" of the Syrians' situation in the city has substantially informed this work. The researcher was able to access a few UNHCR's inter-agency meetings for the Syrian refugees and to other organizations and groups working on the Syrian refugees. The researcher has also been engaged in communicating with many Syrian friends and acquaintances working with the refugee community and this definitely should be accredited as a source of information.

As the research has a multi- and inter-disciplinary nature, the information gathered from the different levels and scope of actors appears in the different chapters and parts of the thesis. Contributions are acknowledged (unless specifically requested to protect the contributor's identity).

### **1.4.3 Limitations**

In addition to the conceptual challenges of bringing separate discourses of urban vs. refugee studies together, there are undeniable ethical and methodological challenges to conducting such a research. There have been open-ended ways of acquiring data through routine engagement in the work with the refugees, yet it is very difficult to get sound and reliable data as self-settled refugees are not documented properly and only few of them have registered with the UNHCR. This has entailed extensive field visits and exploration. Time limitations for a Master's thesis have prevented the researcher from extensively triangulating the data from different sources thus ensuring its validity (although it has been done in the best possible way).

The study area is underexplored and hence it required an initial broad- brush approach, and then the identification of areas of focus, which took time and entailed restructuring and reexamination of specific aspects. The turbulent political situation in Egypt and the living nature of the research as the influxes of refugees are increasing day after day and the data and information are changing dramatically, presented the challenge of keeping track of the changes and constantly updating the data.

The personal engagement of the researcher in working with the Syrian refugees caused ethical conflict as she was given a lot of information through those channels. Careful decisions about whether or not to include this information in the study required re-checking with the informants, some of whom have not been easy to trace. Maintaining ethical conduct while playing multi-roles, and finding channels of support to the refugees, is important to report as a challenge. Moreover, in-depth personal involvement necessitated leaving out some introductory information which could have been helpful for the reader.

### **1.4.4 Ethical Considerations**

It is important to record that an assurance of confidentiality was given to the interviewees, to keep their information confidential; particularly the ones from the refugee community, as some of the interviewees were truly scared to jeopardize their families back in Syria by being recognized or having their information leaked or shared. The research assistant gave an oral vow to the researcher not



to discuss, divulge or impart any of the respondents' confidential information.

### **1.5 Main Definitions**

The research has considered few definitions throughout this work in order to maintain consistency.

**Refugees:** The distinction between forced migrants, voluntarily displaced groups and refugees is not sharply made as it is difficult in these cases to distinguish volition and coercion (Majidi 2011). According to the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, (1951) the definition of refugee is: "any person who owing to a well-founded fear of being for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself" (UN 1951). Internally displaced groups (IDPs) are distinguished from refugees by being forced to leave their homes but stay in the same country or city; mostly for reasons different from the ones mentioned in the previous definition such as demolition of their homes for public projects or others (Majidi 2011).

**A Refugee Community:** this study considers a community of shared characteristics, identity, and place of origin, ethnicity, or other commonalities, in its boundaries in the specific urban spaces which were examined during the study. Social communities could also be made in transnational forms such as diasporas, but these forms were not studied.

**Informal governance:** has been identified in section (3.4)

**Protection:** as per the UNHCR definition " to ensure the basic human rights of uprooted or stateless people in their countries of asylum or habitual residence and that refugees will not be returned involuntarily to a country where they could face persecution. Longer term, the organization helps refugees find appropriate durable solutions to their plight, by repatriating voluntarily to their homeland, integrating in countries of asylum or resettling in third countries." (2013)

**Protection Space:** is discussed in section (2.5.3)

## **1.6 Overview of Thesis Chapters**

**Chapter 1: Introduction to Background, Objectives and Methodological Framework**

This chapter defines the research problem and introduces the context of research. It also provides an overview on the organization of the thesis. The research purpose and the deployed methodology are reported in this chapter, as well as the key definitions used throughout the research and the criteria behind the choice of the case studies.

**Chapter 2: Cities and Refugees, Humanitarian assistance in Urban Areas (Literature and Policy Review)**

This chapter will discuss the general trend of refugees in urban settings and the different challenges and coping mechanisms set by the refugees. It will further look at the urban spaces where migrants and refugees enter the city and settle and raise discussions around humanitarian concepts such as protection and their interpretation in an urban context.

**Chapter 3: Cairo as a Place of Refuge and the Influx of Syrian Refugees (Contextual Analysis)**

This chapter will build the contextual ground for both the city and the refugees. It will present Cairo as a place of refuge for the groups of refugees who lived in it since the turn of the twentieth century. It also discusses the ways in which Cairo has been viewed in the discourse of refugees and the general urban aspects, modes of governance especially in the post- revolution era. It will further provide a quick scan of the history of the Syrian refugees in the region, their numbers and the chronological order of their arrival.

**Chapter 4: Syrian Refugees' places of settlement, activities and their mobility within Cairo's urban spheres**

This chapter will present the findings of the empirical field work. It will examine the general ways in which interactions with urban forms are taking place, and observe the interplay of the many and complex factors influencing the voluntary or involuntary choice of a place of residence and the mechanisms of dispersal and clustering. The discussion will then highlight specific urban spaces where Syrian refugees have started to form communities by examining a "community making" process in Sitta October satellite city and the kinds of relationships and networks observed within these spaces. It will further discuss few journeys around the city and the motives behind intra-city migration.

**Chapter 5: Separate refugee communities in between Exclusionary housing projects, gated Communities and informal settlements**

This chapter will look closely at typologies of urban forms in the geopolitical spheres of Cairo where considerable numbers of Syrian refugees are settled, and investigate the influence of local politics and structures of governance on aspects related to “protection” of the refugees in these spaces. It will further raise a general discussion around the ways in which local politics and urban governance influence refugees’ protection showing how different urban spaces treat refugees differently.

**Chapter 6: Political Setting: Actors, Networks and Self-organized Structures**

The chapter will provide an initial exploration of the frameworks of relationships and actors involved in the Syrian refugees’ context on a wider city level (formal governance). It will try to locate the specific informal governance structures in a broader picture of the humanitarian regime and other actors’ networks which are universal. In addition, it will investigate the social and political participation environment in Cairo and the way in which the produced calculus of relationships is influencing overall humanitarian assistance and self-organized structures.

**Chapter 7: Conclusions, Recommendations and future Outlook**

This chapter will summarize the key findings and review some scenarios for the city in regards to refugees and migrant communities. It will further suggest some recommendations for improving the general working environment with refugees in Cairo and draw some generalized conclusions with which to end this paper.



Saman 2013

## **Chapter 2**



### **Cities and Refugees, Humanitarian Assistance in Urban Areas (literature and policy review)**



## Introduction

This chapter introduces the theoretical foundation of the research by reviewing the relevant themes which guide the empirical analysis. More specifically, this chapter examines the general trend of refugees living in urban areas especially in the global south and the challenges they face in cities. It will discuss some of their coping strategies, namely their community formation strategy, and develop a theoretical understanding around the characteristics of the urban spaces in which refugees and other migrant communities make communities (See figure 2.). It will use a rights- based approach, addressing their rights to settling in cities and in the freedom of movement in urban situations as enshrined in international and national protocols, looking closely at the concept of protection and protection space in urban settings.

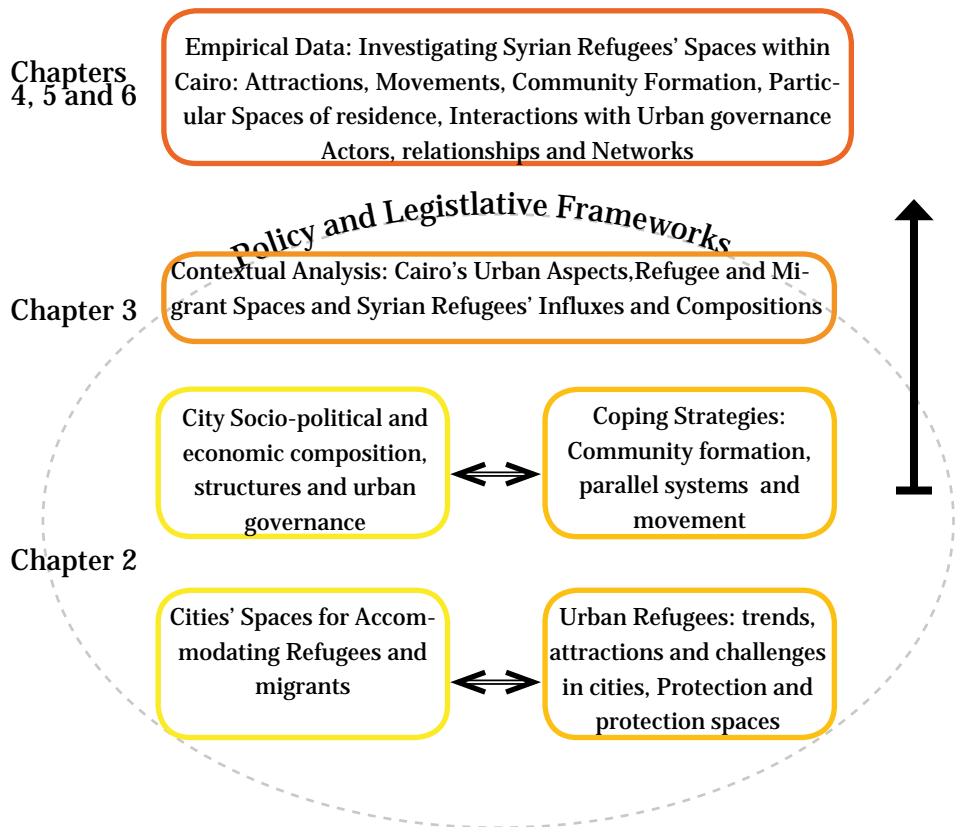


Figure2. Detailed Framework for the Theoretical and Contextual Chapters based on Figure. 1 with the themes discussed in this and the following chapters. Source: Author

## **2.1 Urban Refugees: A Growing Trend**

Refugees increasingly make their ways to towns and cities, leaving camps or bypassing them altogether. Not only refugees are attracted to cities, the whole world is becoming more urbanized. Whereas 730 million urban inhabitants were reported in 1950 and some 3.3 billion in 2009, the percentage of urban population to total population is expected to increase by 72% between 2011 and 2050 (UNHCR 2009, UN DESA 2011 cited in WDR 2012). It has also been recorded that more refugees and IDPs are found in urban areas than in rural areas; in 2010 this number was thought to have reached fifty percent of the world's refugees and IDPs (Zetter 2012). It is believed that this proportion will continue to rise given the urban displacement trends and demographic growth factors of refugees already living in urban areas (Haysom 2013). As civil or political conflicts endure, more and more displaced groups are now labeled 'protracted' with over two-thirds (7.1 million) of the world's 10.4 million refugees in protracted (i.e. 5 number of years or more) exile (Zetter and Long 2012). Not only are numbers of refugees and IDPs increasing, the composition of urban refugees is changing too, from predominantly young men who usually can survive in the city more easily to larger numbers of women, children and older people who are more vulnerable (UNHCR 2009).

## **2.2 Attractions to and Challenges of the City**

In the global south, urban settings create challenges for survival for refugees, yet offer ways to "conceal" themselves illegally and to hide their social insecurity (Grabska 2006). Among the well known urban centers in Africa and the Middle East for receiving refugees are: Johannesburg, Nairobi, Cairo, Dar Es Salaam, Kampala, Damascus (previously), Amman, Beirut and Tehran. Many factors attract refugees to cities: better channels for livelihood opportunities, anonymity, freedom of movement and access to power brokers in urban areas (Kobia and Cranfield 2009; Landau 2012; Haysom 2013). Their previous urban experience- i.e. being from a city, is also an important factor although it showed variation among different groups of refugees (Haysom 2013; WDR 2012). However, refugees' increasing presence in urban areas brings new roles to aid and humanitarian agencies, both national and international, and it presents both challenges and opportunities (Morand *et al* 2012). Protection in an urban setting entails a supportive environment, but also a wider range of partnerships and actors including service providers, urban administration, police, civil society and traditional interlocutors, than a rural environment would offer. Urban refugees live in contexts of soaring unemployment rates and struggling economies, and face exploi-



tation, threat of involuntary repatriation and arrest, harassment, discrimination, vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and many other aspects of the struggle to survive (ibid). They usually share spaces with the urban poor, have limited access to basic urban services, and are sometimes blocked in ways to livelihoods as they compete with the poor host community (Grabska 2006). In many cities, these circumstances have driven refugees into acute poverty (WDR 2012). Durable solutions are translated through three strands: local integration in host countries, voluntary repatriation to country of origin or resettlement. If return to place of origin is impossible, and resettlement to a third country is mostly unattainable, local integration is the solution which should be developed and encouraged for a large portion of refugee communities around the world.

### **2.3 The making of refugee ‘communities’: In pursuit of maximizing social capital**

With the population density in urban settings, access to different types of resources is easier and forms of social capital are more likely to develop (Jacobson 2006). Grabska (2006) contends that the process of marginalization involves legal, social, political and cultural inequalities and exclusion. Coping strategies naturally develop in pursuit of livelihood opportunities and long term solutions, sowing the seeds for community formation (ibid; Jacobson 2006). Refugees establish networks to access material and moral support with co-nationals, and also utilize employment networks, charitable organizations or charity-minded individuals and make friendships with the locals (Jacobson 2006). Minnick (2009) reported family networks and communities based on family and kinship relationships among Iraqi refugees. Family plays an important role in quest of protection for refugees (Chatelard 2008). Manifestations of establishing communities are diverse. Some are developed through a sense of belonging and constructing a collective identity, organizational power, leadership and self-organized structures (Minnick 2009, Jacobson 2006). Kelly (2003) suggests the term “contingent community” to refer to refugee communities which are created by external actors such as NGOs and other organizations (Cited in Minnick 2009). Hyndman (1997) has remarked that the “rhetoric of community” has been raised extensively among actors in the refugee context and often does not reflect genuine formed communities (ibid.). Indeed, as communities are evolutionary in nature, it can be difficult to distinguish between a group and a community until the shared characteristics or identification becomes strong enough to identify a group as a community.

## **2.4 The Formation of Communities from an Urban Perspective:**

### **Urban spaces in response to refugees**

The body of literature that looks at how refugees negotiate their ways through a city is still small but one could still benefit from the literature of migration to interrogate urban spaces in which refugees settle. Refugees have an extra search for psycho-social and security support, their state is uncertain and the option of return, or continuation to another destination, is not instantly available (Haysom 2013). The structures of incorporation which have been discussed in migration studies as vital for providing feelings of security and protection are not yet tightly woven; traditional family and place of origin relationships and other forms of networks are still emerging (Saunders 2011). Saunders argues that emergency emigrations, driven by feelings of temporariness, take time to invest in social capital institutions.

Urban spaces as “expressions of infrastructure networks working harmoniously and discordantly at once to provide inhabitants with shelter, contact, energy, water and means of transportation” are conceptually and functionally loaded with extra meanings for a refugee experience (Graham 2000 cited in Wahdan 2012). Urban spaces which accommodate new comers have been discussed widely as the “gateways”, “communities of convenience”, “arrival cities” and “urban estuaries” (Saunders 2011; Landau 2012). Landau (2012) argues that these spaces have varying characteristics and embody no prevailing values of institutions as shaped around the daily surviving response mechanisms. He further contends that they are sometimes cosmopolitan (not in a utopian sense), conflictual and conservative, with a changing nature as the continuous geographical movement into-out of and within the city creates poor social authorities (Landau 2012). Saunders (2011) reviews their roles as key devices for the emergence of coming generations of middle class locals who have “upward mobility”. These urban spaces progressively form the loci of the socio-economic and political connections with the original places from which these groups have come and are produced by over-layering transience and marginalization (Landau 2012). In this regard Landau (2009) notes that some refugees are better equipped at negotiating urban economies, even if not their own, than rural migrants from the same country, especially when moving from third world cities, but confront different sets of challenges (discussed earlier in this section ).

Refugees, transient as they usually perceive themselves at the beginning of their arrival, have their urban spaces which may also have ties to a third county (to which they might move). These spaces are to be examined in scales that represent their complexities, multi-sited dynamics of engagement “we should pan widely and focus more locally” (Landau 2012) stepping out of the language of “national integration” and host/guest dualities to more de-centered spaces in which informal conviviality plays an important role (ibid.).

This looks at both sides of the humanitarian: refugee discourse, and the types of urban spaces in the (city: urban) environments that are allowing and hosting refugees and structures and the corresponding relationships. The following section is going to revisit the rights- based side of refugees living in urban areas from an urban perspective and through policy attitudes towards those rights in both international and national legislative systems.

## **2.5 A Rights-based Approach to Refugees: from Urban Perspectives to Policy Attitudes in the International and National legislative Systems**

### **2.5.1 Right to the City and to Freedom of Movement for Refugees**

Migration and ports of arrival contribute a great deal to the shaping of many of the world’s cities. In the urban discourse, the “right to the city” was set by Henri Lefebvre in 1960s and meant to strengthen the effective engagement of ‘city-zens’ in the production and design of their spaces and their right to appropriation (Fawaz 2013). Contemporary evocation of “the right to the city” supports a different level of entitlements, such as accessing public services and/or integrating residents of unplanned areas within the larger city scopes (ibid). Within the key rights of a citizen is the discourse addressing the right to the city as an individual, and in relationships of the minority to the majority as defined by Dworkin (Attoch 2011 cited in Berney 2013). Minorities and Majorities recall the work of many urban scholars who addressed ‘difference’ as a main component of today’s cities. Sandercock (2002: 14) suggests that having ‘difference’ on the planning agenda for cities is to consider the socio-cultural forces of: “transnational migration, post colonialism and the rise of civil society”. From this perspective, refugees, as part of the forced transnational migration, form important carriers of ‘difference’ to cities especially when their situations are protracted.

Yet the discussion of “refugees’ right to the city” is perceived differently from “city-zen-ship”, and is questioned within conditioning factors of the politics of nation states, the temporariness and uncertainty of refugees’ status, and

addresses their right to appropriate space and how they relate to the nationals. This raises questions of What rights?, and Enshrined by whom?, for ‘the strangers’ who are not voluntarily coming to share the space of the city with the ‘city-zens’ . This approach reveals discrepancies brought by the varying positions towards the political meanings that refugees embody. They are often viewed as ‘troublemakers’ by the administrators and regulators of host countries and encounter varying legislative systems that range between accepting/refusing, providing space or marginalizing them in urban areas. It boldly raises the question; whose responsibility is this specific category of strangers? The discussion raised in the section below will look at refugees’ rights as stated in international and national policies on refugees.

### **2.5.2 In between National and International Regimes: Shifting responsibilities**

Refugees in the global south are confronted by inconsistent national policies to dealing with them, some welcome them in cities and others do not. Kagan (2013) argues that on the whole, host countries in the global south tend to deflect responsibility for refugees away from themselves and transfer it onto the international community in order to tolerate their presence on their land (Kagan 2013), as if this makes it easier to accept their presence, especially if someone else is contributing to their costs.

The UNHCR policy on Urban Refugees developed incrementally to provide policy directions for solutions in urban areas from a series of features enshrining the rights of refugees: the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees, its amending protocol in 1967, the initial policy paper for urban areas in 1997 and its refined amendments to develop the policy document on “Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas” published in September, 2009, associated with the Iraqi refugees operation (Crisp *et al* 2009; Goodwin Gill 1996; Kagan 2011; UNHCR 2009). The recommendations and policy directions specific to urban areas in that document ensures the refugees’ freedom of movement and their entitlement to protection following the preceding Convention. However, it has been criticized for being rigid and lacking innovation especially when dealing with protracted displacements (Zetter and Long 2012). While in practice, Haysom (2013) contends that the humanitarian sector has been trapped into thinking of refugees in urban environments from a single perspective, their traditional histories of “Managing Exclusion” in camps, and is trying to change the (tools) rather than the (approaches) which prove unsuccessful in the cases of

prolonged displacements.

### **2.5.3 Urban Protection Space**

Protection is a key concept in the humanitarian system and it has been developed to accommodate the needs of urban refugees. “Protection Space”; as repeatedly stated and discussed through the articles of the UNHCR policy on urban refugees, appears to have physical characteristics as dynamic, changeable, expandable, flexible and constrained (derived from the articles in the policy) [i]. It has also been influenced by national structures of support, local governments’ attitudes and policies, and reactions of the host population, civil society, the UNHCR and other actors. Building on this, protection space is understood as “the extent to which there is a conducive environment for the internationally recognized rights of refugees to be respected and upheld” (Crisp *et al* 2009: 14). Slim and Bonwick (2005) noted that protection is not a commodity which is delivered like food items but rather something that people struggle to achieve and thus begin to think of refugees beyond victims and as active agents in their lives of displacements (cited in WDR 2012).

Nonetheless, the conceptual and perceptual natures of protection spaces are arguably lived differently, similar to the way in which production of space in urban contexts have been discussed (Elden 2004). Protection space seems to have been conceived in the way it is set in the policy document, perceived differently by each operation and agency working in urban areas and lived another way in between urban spaces and according to structures of urban politics. The current study will shed light on its lived part in (Chapter 5)

### **2.6 Egyptian National Context for Refugees’ Protection**

Egypt is a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the later 1967 protocol as well as 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Refugee Convention, but it lacks national asylum legislative frameworks and it marginalizes refugees by law (Bailey 2009, Kagan 2013). Article 57 in the new constitution has granted the right of asylum and guaranteed to every foreigner [ii] (Youssef 2012). Nevertheless, the responsibility for refugees is deflected to the UNHCR which has responsibilities beyond those mandated (Danielson 2012). Some refugees are allowed access to public services and others are not, following bilateral treaties (such as the Nile Valley Agreement with Sudan 1974 (Zohry 2003)) and to the government’s position at certain points of time such as the government’s current supportive position towards the Syrians which is subject to change (e.g. such as the change of policy towards the Palestinians in 1978 following the peace treaty

with Israel (Waleed 2005), and the change in ways of dealing with the Sudanese refugees following the assassination attempt of former president Mubarak in Ethiopia in 1995 by a Sudanese refugee (Anon 2013). “Refugee self-reliance remains elusive in Cairo” (Sperl 2001:3 cited in Minnick 2009: 14). Local integration “remains a distant goal...resettlement has become the only viable durable solution for most refugees in Cairo” (ibid: 14). Nonetheless, for most refugees, resettlement in a third country is widely unattainable, so integration is the only option.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Discussing urban spaces which accommodate newcomers involves an understanding of the cities’ history and structures for migrants and refugees. With the increasing numbers of refugees seeking sanctuary in urban areas and the many challenges they encounter in these settings, a solid, corresponding link of both disciplines is needed. Whilst refugees’ studies and literature have looked extensively at humanitarian concerns, livelihood strategies, forming communities and identity shifts, the urban environment which accommodates these activities is just as complex. The theoretical foundation of understanding the compositions and characteristics of these areas is important to guide the empirical analysis. The international and national legislative systems play a crucial role in creating spaces for refugees in cities and their specifically developed policy directions for urban areas would form an important reference for action, for learning and further refinement.

[i]

“expands and contracts periodically according to the changes in the socio-economic and political and security environment’ UNHCR’s policy on refugees in urban areas thus has two principal objectives: to ensure that cities are recognized as legitimate places for refugees to reside and exercise the rights to which they are entitled; and, to maximize the protection space available to urban refugees and the humanitarian organizations that support them. (UNHCR 2009: 4)

“It must be recognized, however, that UNHCR will be constrained in its ability to attain this objective in countries where refugees are scattered across a large number of urban locations”. (UNHCR 2009: 3)

[ii]

Article 57 of the Egyptian Constitution:

“The right to political asylum shall be granted by the State to every foreigner deprived in their country of public rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution”.

“Extradition of political refugees is prohibited”. (Youssef 2012)





**Chapter 3** | **Cairo as a Place of Refuge and the Influx  
of Syrian Refugees  
(Contextual Analysis)**



## **Introduction**

**T**his chapter will build the contextual framework of the issues discussed throughout the thesis; the context of the city of Cairo and its urban spaces that accommodate refugees and the flow of Syrian refugees over time, their characteristics and socio-economic profiles and their dispersal in Egypt. It will also look into the ways in which the city of Cairo has been viewed in studies of refugees, and touch upon some of its urban and governance aspects which will develop a framework for building knowledge about the city's venues and the ways these refugees are accommodated and settled in the city.

### **3.1 Cairo as a place of Refuge**

Cairo's cityscapes have been extensively shaped by "migrants" from rural areas in Egypt since the 1960s (Sims 2011). The 'informal settlements' which are dispersed over the different parts of the city are examples of rural to urban migrant spaces. However, Cairo has also long been a haven for many African and Middle Eastern refugees. Looking through the history of the city as a place of refuge, Cairo has served as one of the biggest ports of arrival for refugees in the MENA region, north-eastern Africa and further afield. In chronological order, and since the turn of the 20th century, main refugee groups who fled to Cairo include Armenians with some Kurds, Palestinians, Sudanese in sequential fluxes (big waves in the 1950s, 1970s, 1990s, and 2000s and till now), individual activists from liberation movements in African countries, Somalis, Ethiopians, Eritreans, few Iranians and Serbians, Iraqis and now the Syrians among others (Zohry 2003; Ismail 2002; Gozdzia and Walter 2012). Before the arrival of the Syrians, the total number of registered asylum seekers and refugees in contact with the UNHCR was around 45,000 persons (UNHCR 2011). Palestinians, Armenians and the smaller groups are not among the registered ones. There are approximately 70,000 Palestinian who formed the largest refugee community before the arrival of the Syrians (See figure 3. and Appendix 1 for details).

These groups form an important constituent of Cairo's urban residents and their spaces of residence range from informal areas: Arb'a wa Nus, Arab Al Maadi and Ard El Liwa among others, to high-end organized areas such as Rehab, Heliopolis and Sitta October. Locating the areas of refugee settlements on the map of Cairo with the other layers of migrant communities is important for drawing future scenarios for certain urban spaces of the city as some of these spaces may develop as "migrant neighbourhoods" and will probably reveal different characteristics.

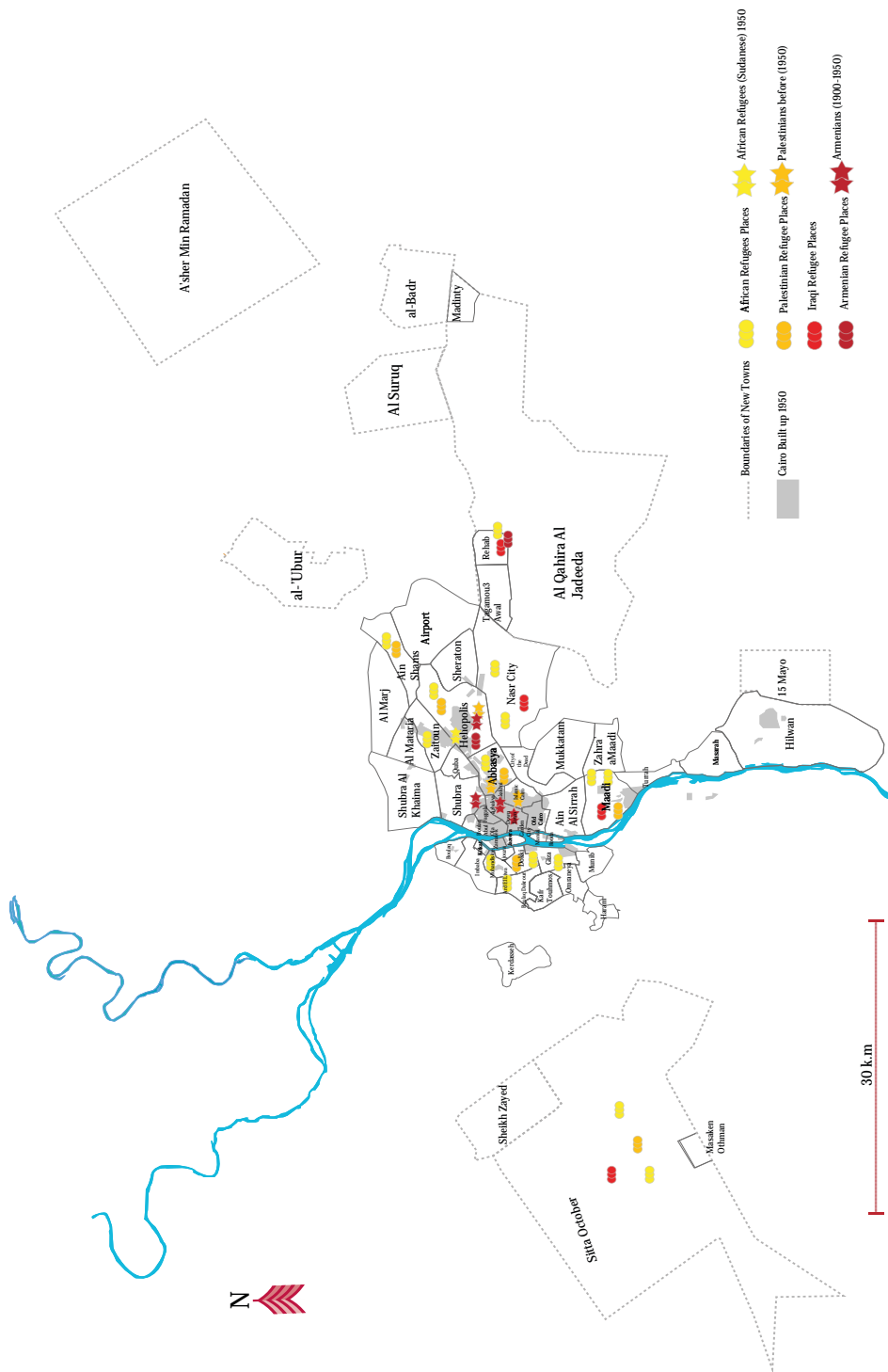


Figure 3. Places of Refuge in Cairo for non-Syrian refugees based on narrative listed in Appendix (1). Source: Developed by Author based on (Sejourne & Sims 2009 cited in Sims 2011) and on primary data

The section below discusses the ways in which Cairo has been perceived as a place of refuge.

### **3.2 Dichotomies of Cairo as a place of Refuge**

A different level of discourse is instigated here; an attempt to locate Cairo between scenarios of cosmopolitanism (a tolerance and acceptance of diversity within the urban population) and heightened levels of xenophobia (a rejection and even vilification of diversity). Al Sharmani and Grabaska (2011) noted that the influxes of refugees in Cairo during the last century have made it a melting pot of different faces, nationalities, traditions, languages and cultures. In the same study, they explore the options for refugees (specifically African ones): safer urban spaces where they can live and earn a living, with less harassment and fewer assaults, and somewhere they can develop their own self-organized communities and parallel systems of governance (ibid.). Interestingly, Cairo teaches refugees to cope with their circumstances through the multiple opportunities it offers for adaptation within the informal sector, and in particular, the testing of survival strategies of the poorer groups of refugees.

Nonetheless, following the Egyptian revolution, “Refugees in Egypt are arguably facing greater discrimination, xenophobia, restrictions on movement, evictions from homes, and an overall hostility” than before the revolution Khallaf (2012) contends. UNHCR reported more xenophobic attitudes, especially against African refugees, who were for years subject to racially-based discrimination and harassment, and early assessments revealed a deteriorating protection environment for all refugees since the Egyptian revolution (De Haas and Sigona 2012 cited in WDR 2012). In the current unrest, the situation of Syrians is dramatically deteriorating with arbitrary detention, public demonization, assaults, hate speech and rejection attitudes (primary data July 2013)

In the literature on migration, Cairo has been viewed from different angles; as a transitory city, as many forced migrants (refugees) consider going to a third country or repatriating home given its limited capacities to integrate them (Zohry 2003), and popular place of settlement for many rural migrants. Cairo is also a home for internally displaced people (IDPs). It accommodates many intra-country displaced people; such as the displacement from the Suez Canal area in 1967 and other Egyptians forcibly displaced from rural areas. Intra-Cairo displacement has resulted in the relocation of around 20,000 families during the last 10 years caused by unsafe housing and construction of public projects in specific areas (@shadowMoH 2013). For refugees, the prevalent image as ‘transitory’ is

attributed to the systems of marginalizing refugees which are embedded in exclusionary policies, the negative public discourse on, and attitudes towards, refugees and to actual experiences of daily hardships, economic deprivation and precarious social and legal situations (Grabska 2006; Grabaska and Shermai 2011; Goździak and Walter 2012)

### **3.3 Cairo's Urban places of Refuge**

Cairo is the home to approximately quarter of Egypt's 83 million inhabitants (Kipper 2009). The city is a central hub for political and economic activities in Egypt catering for most of the jobs in the manufacturing and services' sectors (ibid.). It has a huge informal housing sector with multiple economic activities which support the poorest of its residents. These areas, however, are no longer the exclusive domains of the poor, as they have developed avenues for ownership and accommodation of lower-middle and middle class residents as well. (Soliman 2004 cited in Hussain 2012). The city itself is spatially divided. Poor residents, constituting around 65% of the city's population, tend to live in informal settlements while at the upper end of the market there are gated enclaves for the richest residents.

Many studies have looked at political settings, modes of citizenships and governance and have started to draw pictures of influence on these different spaces since the Egyptian revolution (see: Sims 2011; Singerman 2011; Marafi 2011; Bush and Ayebe 2012). To date there is little if any examination of the city through the "displacement lens" or more precisely the "refugee lens". The study of urban refugees is concerned with the national, regional and local urbanization modes, urban growth, and formal and informal housing supply, urban services and host communities' attitudes and composition. The urban aspects that are looked at in this chapter are intended to bring a general understanding of the situation and to contrast/correlate that with the issues discussed in humanitarian and refugee studies. More specific discussions on housing supply, urban services and characteristics of specific urban areas are embedded in the body of the analysis in (4-5-6).

### **3.4 Cairo's Modes of Governance and refugees**

In the mega city of Cairo, state authority is effectively absent from many urban settlements due to many reasons; lack of legitimacy, unwilling to govern or not powerful enough to do so (Hussain 2012). Informal governance has become a norm to substitute for that. Urban settlements have developed as cities within the city and informal governance is consequently linked to informal economies and

is compelled to create new or parallel centers of power forming an integral part of the city's system (ibid.). "The term 'urban governance' implies a greater diversity in the organization of services, a greater flexibility, a variety of actors ...and the complexity of new forms of citizenship" (Le Gals 1995: 60; cited in Hanafi 2010).

It has been argued that globalization is penetrating through public power, and is manifested in many ways through regional, municipal and neighbourhood levels in Cairo (Singerman 2011). "Globalization succeeds as it appears almost home-grown" (ibid: 3). While Singerman depicts the contemporary landscape of Cairo as contested, Al Sayyed and Roy (2006) highlight the fact that urban citizenship is increasingly fragmented and divided. They argue that urban citizenship is embedded within territorially competing sovereignties producing fiefdoms of 'control' or of 'no law' (ibid.). The outcome of the contest between these competing or collaborating centers of power is likely to create a sense of insecurity, particularly for informal settlements' residents (Hussain 2012). Amin (2010) contends that the fragmentations of Cairo are linked to emotional unrest and that the physical infrastructure promotes those feelings amongst the inhabitants influencing their morale.

"Refugees in the global south who reside in urban centres confront and directly contribute to the processes of globalization" (Grabska 2006: 3), yet the ways in which they contribute to these processes are not widely investigated. A rarely recognized form of globalization from below happens through the ties refugees keep or establish to their own countries and diaspora linking cities of refuge to other urban nodes and to rural areas (Sassen 1995; Faist 2000; Castells 1996 cited in Landau 2009).

The fragmented, contested and emotionally overloaded nature of the city poses extra pressures on refugees whose psycho-social needs are at the heart of the asylum experience. Some of these stresses are going to be discussed through the findings in Chapters (5). The following section will look at the displacement trends in Egypt following the Arab Spring and on the flows of the Syrians to Egypt.



Figure4. Housing in the remote areas of Cairo evokes emotional unrest (Amin 2010).  
Source: Author

### **3.5 The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Cairo**

#### **3.5.1 Introduction to migration trends post to Arab Spring,**

The “Arab Spring” played an important role in creating intra-region migration flows, developing new and complex types of migrants and generating displacement and humanitarian crises (Bonfiglio 2011). The violent and bloody conflict in Syria triggered massive forced displacement inside and outside the country; an estimated daily outflow of 8000 people to the neighbouring and nearby countries in addition to more within the country (UNHCR 2013). Disruptions are expected to affect around four million Syrian individuals outside the county and more internally displaced persons (IDPs) by the end of 2013 (UNHCR 2013).



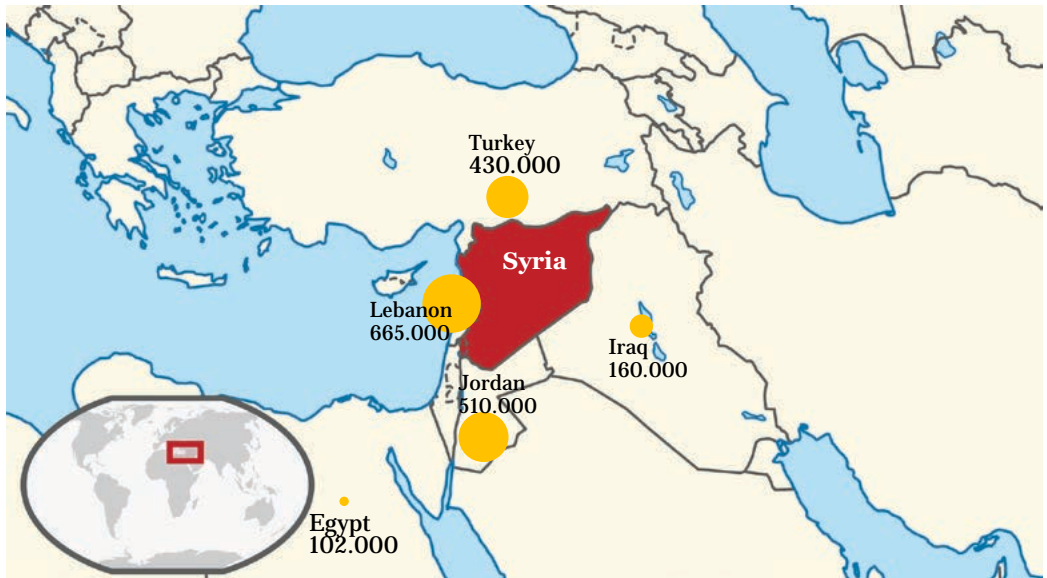


Figure5. Registered Syrian Asylum Seekers By Country  
 Source: Map (Wikipedia 2013); Data (UNHCR portal by July 31st 2013)

Camps have been established near the borders of Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon, and urban centers in these countries along with Lebanon, Egypt and other North African Countries are hosting many Syrian refugees. The underlying factors behind the movement patterns of the forcibly uprooted people are complex and multi-factored (Haysom 2013). One of the impacts of the uprisings is clearly evident in the influence they had on migration dynamics and governance (De Haas and Sigona 2012 cited in WDR 2012). The fleeing Syrian groups are targeting urban centers more than camps or rural areas; 77% urban refugees versus 23% in camps by end of June 2013. (See figure 6 for details of numbers by June, 30th 2013)

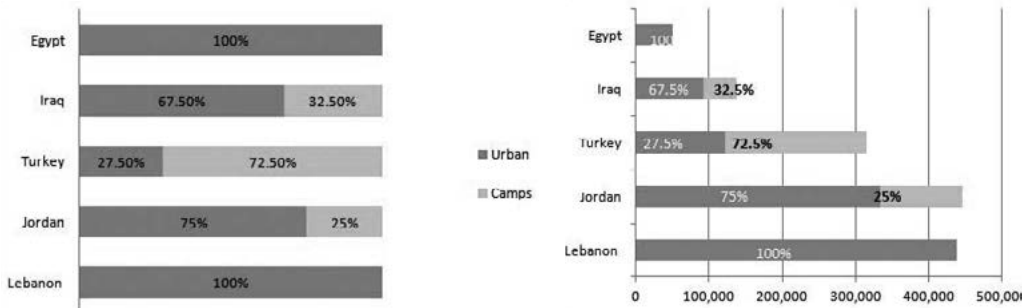
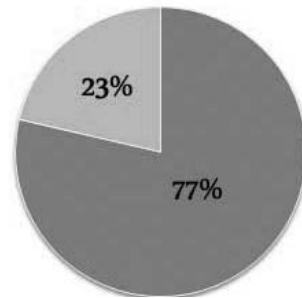


Figure6. Numbers and Percentages of Syrian Refugees by country and by Urban and Camp dwellers by June 30th, 2013. Source: (UNHCR 2013)



### 3.5.2 Syrian refugees in Egypt and Cairo,

Throughout recent history, but especially since the Arab Spring, Egypt has become a host for many refugee groups from the region. The first was the fallout from the conflict in Libya. African refugees and third country residents (TCR) in Libya who poured over the border in (2012) have been sent to a camp in Salloum (near the Libyan borders) to accommodate them until they are repatriated or resettled (IOM 2013).

Even though Egypt does not have direct borders with Syria, it is one of the target countries for Syrians for many reasons, including the following: The no-visa requirements for entry, the cheaper cost of living in urban areas compared to Lebanon and Jordan, the no-camp confinement policies for poorer groups, not to mention the historical and economic ties of the two countries, including earlier ties of previous migration flows of Sham (Greater Syria) in the region to Egypt [i]. The supportive attitudes of both the Egyptian government and the host community are extra encouraging (though by July 8th, 2013 this has changed significantly). In addition, there is more potential for political activism for

some “politically engaged” individuals and for post-revolution connections with internal -Syria conflict and power structures there. Egypt probably comes second on the political activism agenda after Turkey (see Chapter 6 for details). An added incentive is the presidential decree allowing Syrians (and Palestinian/Syrians) access to basic health and education services in Egypt.

By end of July, 2013, some 102.000 Syrians in Egypt were considered as ‘persons of concern’ (registered or awaiting registration). Nonetheless, the number of unregistered ones is much higher, as the initial governmental statistics show more than 300.000 seeking residency documents in Egypt and another unknown number who have no formal documentation (UNHCR portal 2013). Estimates given by random people interviewed ranged from 300.000 to 500.000 Syrian people.

The Syrians started to form communities in Egypt since the spring of 2012. A few families and individuals had come prior to that but not in considerable numbers (Interviewees: Diab and Abu Ammar 2013; UNHCR 2012). The initial communities were concentrated in Sitta October, Alexandria followed by Rehab, Nasr City, Heliopolis and Damietta (Primary data 2012-2013). Later, the dispersion covered more areas and cities in Egypt (See figure 7 and endnote for details on dispersion in Egypt [ii]). The composition of the Syrians is varied as well: Palestinian Syrians, Turkman Syrians, Christians, and smaller portions of different sectarian compositions: Alawite, Ismailis and Druze, etc.... These will all have different political affiliations; however, the majority of the Syrians in Egypt are supporters of the Syrian uprising (JNA 2012).

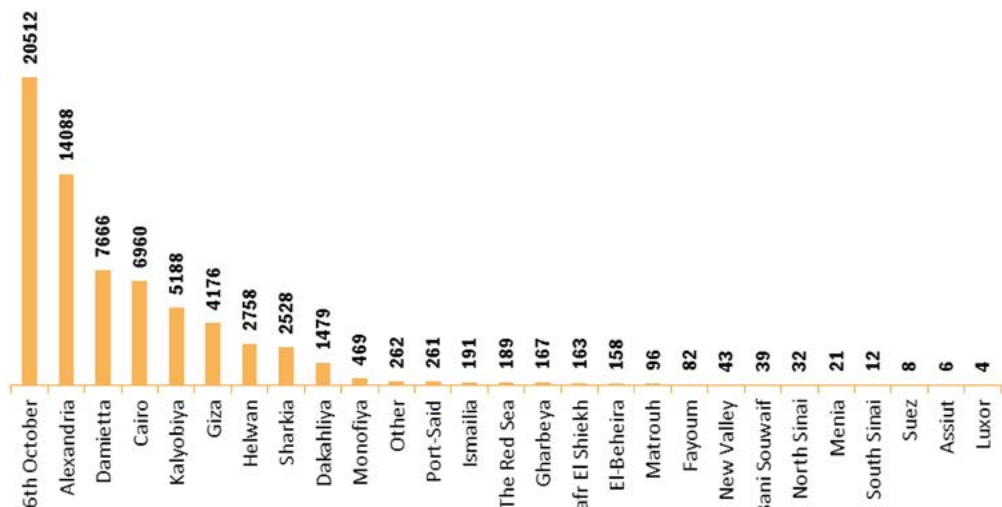


Figure7. The dispersion of registered Syrian Asylum seekers by Egyptian Cities  
Source: (UNHCR 2013)

The profiles of the first comers were distinctively different from the ones who followed, as initially Egypt formed a sanctuary for politically involved individuals and to well-off groups (mostly) who were able to afford the expenses of the journey. Afterwards, and as the conflict escalated and the political situation in Egypt seemed more stable, following the presidential election in July 2012, the waves of refugees also brought poorer groups, vulnerable families and injured individuals (Interviewees: Abu Niddal; IOM 2013; JNA 2012). The political and social connections, and pull factors of community cohesion had a snowball effect in pulling more refugees to Egypt. The first comers were mostly from Homs and Damascus surrounding areas with few from Dara'a, Idleb and Damascus. Today, they are from many different urban and rural places around Syria (See figure 8).

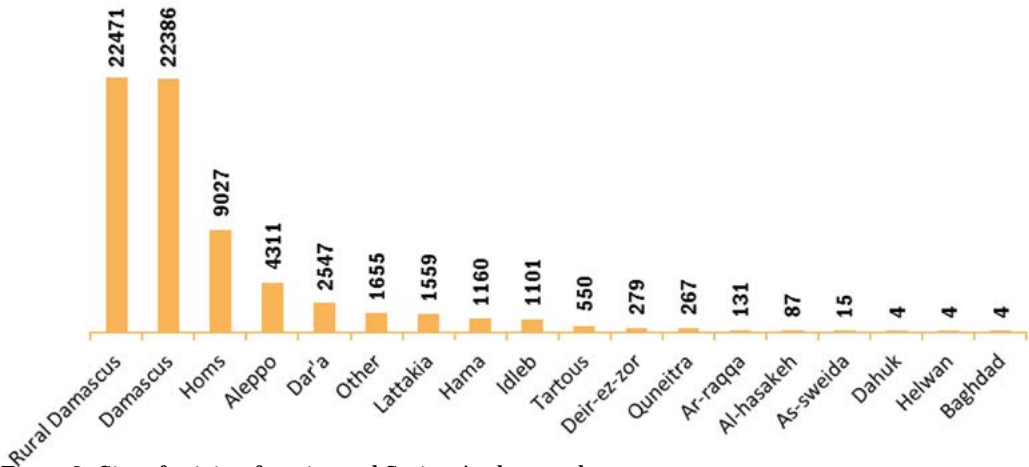


Figure8. City of origin of registered Syrian Asylum seekers  
Source: (UNHCR 2013)

### 3.6. Conclusion

Following the contextual analysis of the refugees' entry to Egypt and dispersion within the Egyptian cities and the general understanding of Cairo as a place of refuge with its urban aspects and modes of governance, the following chapters will discuss the findings of the field research which has been conducted in specific urban spaces around Cairo in an attempt to develop a better understanding of the situation of Syrian refugees in urban areas and the ways in which they develop their new lives in a city like Cairo.

[i]

Note that the general emigration trends of Syrians (Greater Syria) to Egypt have been widely studied and documented especially in the 19th and 20th centuries and there are many books on this subject. As refugees, it is reported that only a few individual political activists have come before the current crisis. The researcher has met one of them,

For an extensive study of the issue of Syrians in Egypt, research examining the relationships of the people of both countries in history is needed. The two countries were one country between (1958-1961) and they maintain older relationships that were administratively connecting the two countries together since the Ottoman times when they were ruled by Mohammad Ali. At that time the people from "al Sham" region were well-known for their trades and for being good at administration (See Albert Hourani, *The Syrians in Egypt in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries* 221-233 in *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire* 27 Mars-5Avril 1969 (Ministry of Culture of the Arabic Republic of Egypt, no date, printed in GDR). Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt 1725-1975* (Steiner 1985).

[ii]

According to an interview with IOM, many entry points are reported for the Syrians to enter Egypt. Focal ones are Nuweiba'a and Al'Areesh in Sinai, Port Said and Suez in the Suez Canal, Alexandria, Damietta, and Cairo. After arriving at the entry point/ reception cities, Syrians have to navigate their ways to other places in Egypt where they have social and economic connections, have heard of good support networks or potential employment, wait for some time and then try to link themselves up with support channels, or leave to somewhere to live for a period of transition until more favourable options present themselves.



## **Chapter 4**

**Syrian Refugees' Places of Settlement,  
Activities and their Mobility within  
Cairo's Urban Spheres,**





## Introduction

**F**ollowing the background on the research's theoretical and methodological frameworks and the contextual analysis of both Cairo as a place of refuge and the Syrian refugees' flows in to Egypt and Cairo, this chapter presents the first set of the empirical findings. The findings presented below are of a descriptive nature, examining general ways in which interactions between refugees and cityscape are taking place, and observing the interplay of the many and complex factors influencing the voluntary or involuntary choice of a place of residence and mechanisms of dispersal and clustering. The discussion will then highlight specific urban spaces where Syrian refugees have started to form communities by examining a "community making" process in Sitta October satellite city where the largest Syrian community is now accommodated and provide evidence of the changes in the socio-economic and cultural hub of that community with the modes of relationships and networks observed within these spaces. To close, it will describe actual refugees' experienced journeys within the urban spheres of Cairo and reflect on the dynamics behind the new social constructions.

### 4.1 Popular locations of settlement for Syrian Refugees

Shelter is a major concern for refugees. Syrians, given the non-existence of camp confinement policies in Egypt, are scattered between urban (with the great majority) and rural areas. There are few allocations of in-between spaces such as



Figure9. Tents set in Nasr City in Cairo by Nomads from Greater Syria  
Source: Author

peri-urban settlements and nomads (see Figure9.).

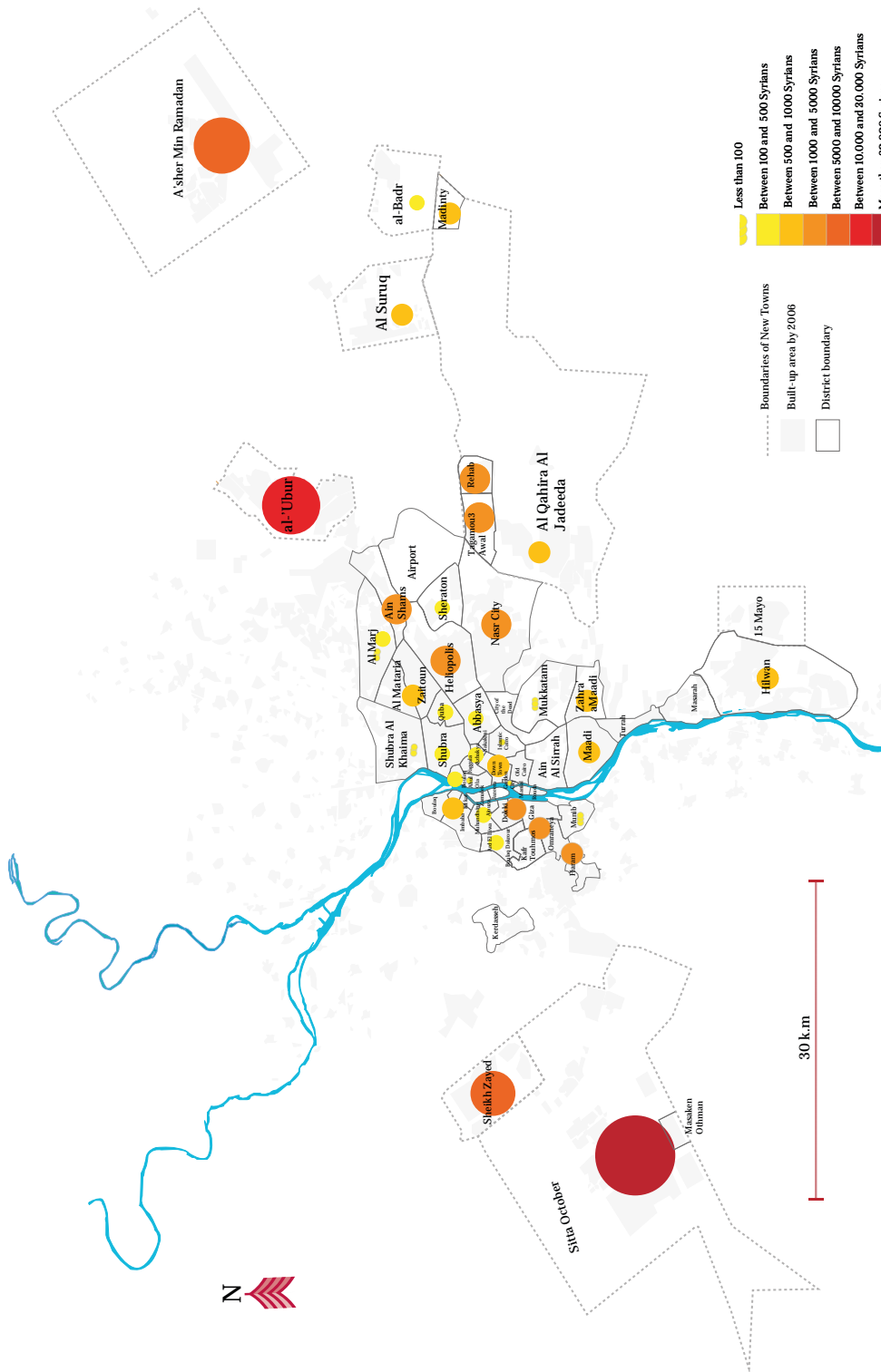


Figure10. Places of Residence and approximate densities of the Syrian Refugees  
Source: Developed by Author based on (Sejourne & Sims 2009 cited in Sims 2011 and based on (UNHCR data)

Comparing the different types of targeted housing for shelter from primary data and from the UNHCR- registered asylum seekers by district, “organized” housing projects in satellite cities seem to be the most popular among the Syrians, as they can offer a wide range of housing options with its massive supply (internal paper UNHCR June 24th 2013, interviewees: Diab, Sa’ed 2013).

Poorer people tend to target public housing (*Gihaz*) and those who afford would go for the better located privately owned (*Ahali*) housing: Said Mr. Mamoun Said in U’bur

UNHCR descriptive statistics show that approximately 45% of Syrian registered asylum seekers are in Greater Cairo Region (GRC) and 70% of the Syrian population in Cairo is accommodated in new towns (See figure 10, 11). Sitta October accommodates around one third of all registered asylum seekers in Egypt and around 66% of them in GCR (UNHCR 2013). On the whole, there is a clear understanding among refugee communities of the types of available housing for accommodation; public and privately owned (*Gihaz* and *Ahali*) (interviewee: Said 2013). Comparing the total number of refugees to Cairo’s residents, it could be argued that the percentage is small. Yet, noteworthy that refugees’ concentrations in specific urban areas should be considered separately. For example, Syrians in Sitta October constitute more than 15% of its total residents (compared to Wahdan 2012). Settlement in these areas is happening because of a complex interplay of a multitude of factors, as discussed below.

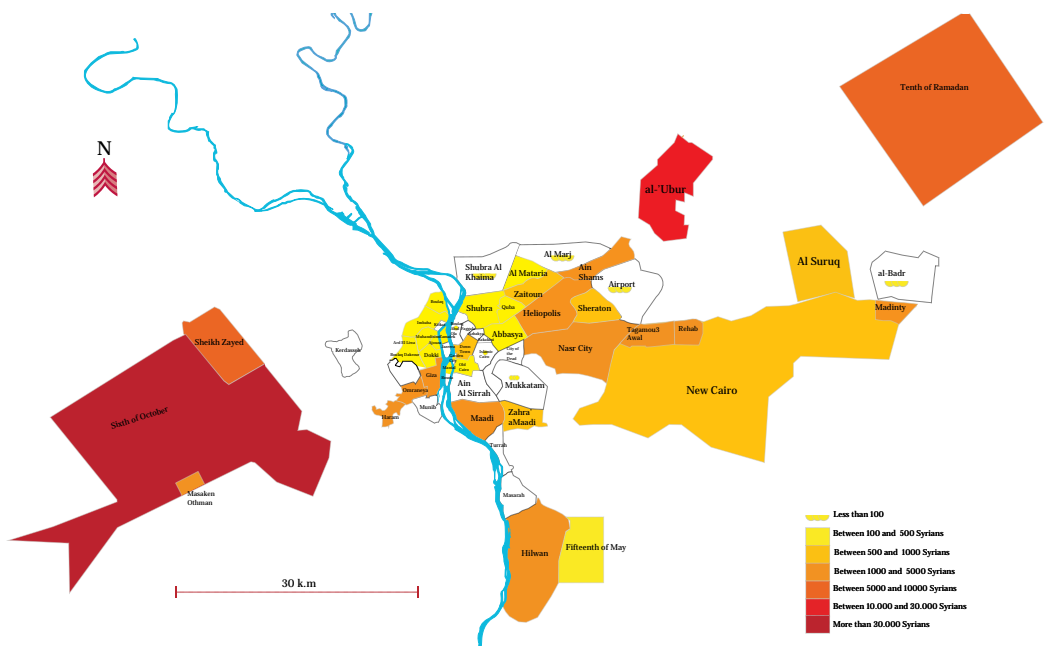


Figure11. Places of Residence of Syrians done in an artistic way with same info to figure10. Source: Author

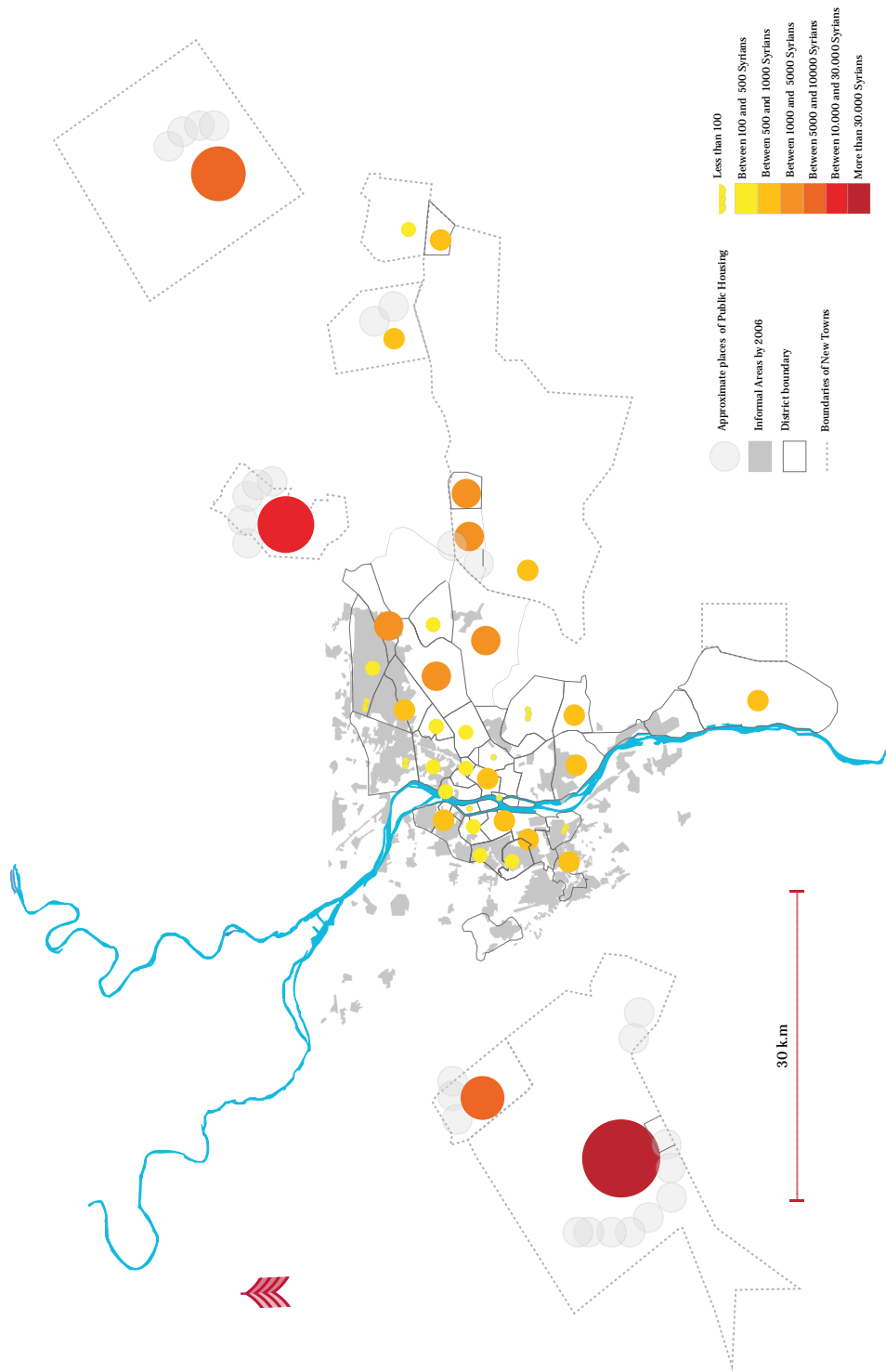


Figure12. Syrian refugees dispersion in between remote housing and informal areas  
 Source: Developed by Author based on (Sejourne & Sims 2009 cited in Sims 2011 and based on (UNHCR data)

## 4.2 What attracts? What repels? Push/Pull Factors

The factors underlying the reasons for settling in specific areas of the city

contribute to the core of the discourse on understanding the range of urban responses to refugee influxes, which will assist in managing those influxes and projecting potential future trends. In the literature review, many of these factors were addressed; however, some are specific to the case of the Syrians in Cairo (such as rent-free housing options through charitable networks). The ways in which some Syrians choose/or are given accommodation (in many cases it is not their preferred option) and settle in particular areas, and the motives listed as reasons behind their decision are the main drivers of the discussions rose below. Economic profiles (i.e. the amount of money the refugee families can afford to pay for accommodation) play an important role in the decision about where to settle, with equal consideration given to the urban form, location and type of available housing. The drawing below with the weighting of pull and push factors has been based on data collected in questionnaires as well as open and informal interviews with refugees in different areas. Some factors were repeatedly mentioned such as access to schooling for children; however the factors discussed in the following section are based on importance and potential for discussion.

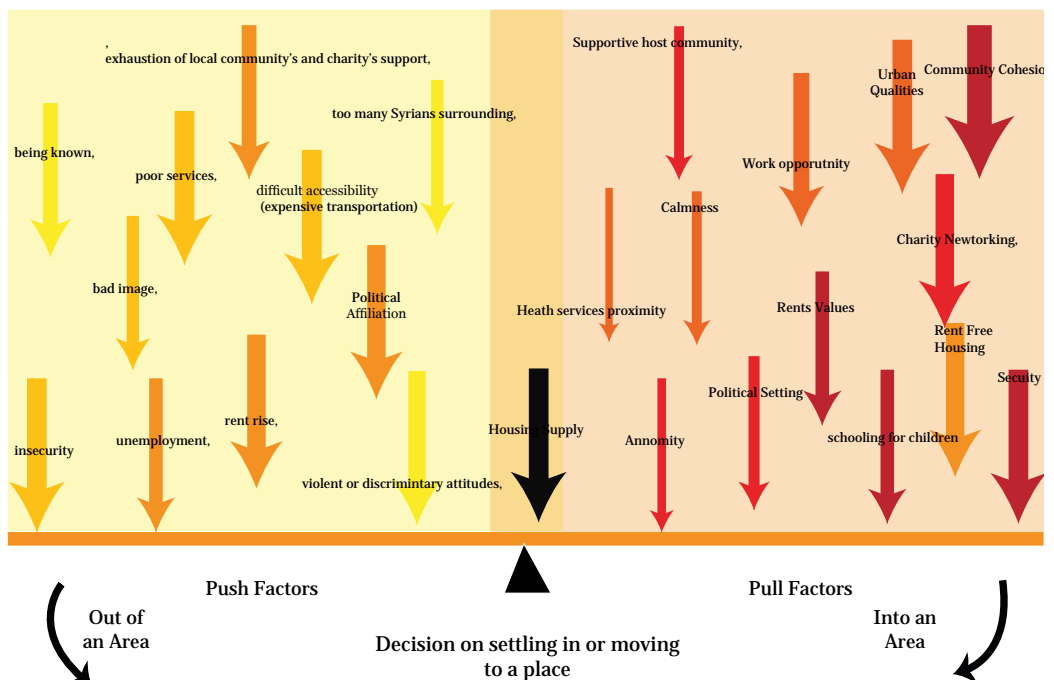


Figure13. Weighting of push and pull factors based on frequency of answers  
Source: Author

### 4.2.1 Supply of housing

The supply side of housing is one of the determinant factors to living in particular areas and to allowing the growth of communities. New towns in the suburbs of Cairo have many vacant apartments to meet the demand side, mainly of the Syrians and to enable them to begin to form new communities (See figure 14 for occupancy ratio in new towns).

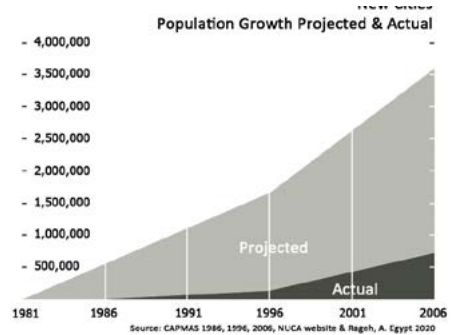


Figure14. Actual occupancy of housing in New Towns  
Source: (Shawkat 2013)

The findings of the primary data revealed that the majority of the Syrians preferred newer buildings in cleaner areas and were originally from urban and sub-urban areas (See Appendix.3). Therefore, they like to seek sanctuary in areas that are

We wish we could move from this area, however, the support from Khatem Al Mursaleen mosque is what brought us here although we do not like it much” said a Syrian refugee in the informal settlement of Omraneya

similar to their previous urban experiences, if they can afford to do so (questionnaires, 2013). The informal settlements, particularly the ones built on state-owned land would not be their first choice and indeed, these settlements reported lower percentages of refugee residents. Primary data suggests less than 15% of Syrian refugees settle in informal areas out of those in GCR (See figure 12 for overlaying with informal settlements and public housing). Some push factors are related to commonly- held perceptions of popular “sha’bi” communities in Egypt as insecure, unfamiliar, and dirty (Interviewees: Abu Ahmad 2013). However, this perception could change with time and with the ever increasing numbers of newcomers who will not have such a range of options(Data by end of May, 2013).

### 4.2.2 Cost of rent/affordability

Affordable shelter is an important pull factor. The Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) of UNHCR and other UN agencies showed that the great majority of the Syrians are renting their apartments. Rent values ranged between 250-4500 L.E/ month (41\$ -642\$) for unfurnished apartments according to the areas of residence (JNA 2012, SC 2013). The concentrations of Syrians in specific areas caused an increase in the rental market and in the real estate values in general see table 1.

Area	Rent values per month: unfurnished flats	Reported increase between October, 2012 and May 2013
Rehab	2500-5000 L.E (357-714\$)	20%
U'bur	450-3000 L.E (64-428\$)	20-40%
Sitta October	250-3500 L.E (36-500\$)	20%-60% according to location and type of housing. Housari area, 7th and 8th districts reported highest values.

Table 1. Reported increases in rent values in Rehab, U'bur and Sitta October

Source: different primary data resources (see bibliography)

Thus, securing long-term accommodation in these areas is another dilemma, as refugees with dwindling resources are unable to cope with the increasing rents. U'bur, for example, where an estimated number of more than 10,000 refugees are living, is heavily targeted for having a huge supply of public housing with cheaper rents than elsewhere, although it is relatively remote and underserved. Rent values in U'bur were more or less 1.5 to 2 times in the privately owned housing as compared to public housing (Interviewee: Said 2013). The JNA showed that more vulnerable families live in U'bur than in other surveyed areas (including Haram and Faisal: informal settlements in Giza governorate) (JNA 2012). Despite the fact that the current discourse on Cairo's urban poverty concentrates more on "informal settlement areas" as pockets of the low income population, poor Syrian refugees were found in the margins of new cities. Some informal settlements were considered to be better located in terms of accessibility to urban services (proximity to shops, markets, schools, etc...) and to livelihood options- in some cases, these reported higher rents even though they were only informal settlements (ibid, SC 2013). Rents in privately owned housing in the informal settlement of Faisal had an average of 700 L.E while public housing of U'bur ranged between (400 and 800 L.E). It is worth noting the fact that many informal settlements are acknowledged as heterogeneous and host both middle and lower class groups and that 90% of the informal settlements are connected to urban services (Sims 2011).

The central area of Sitta October reported highest levels of rents for both housing and shops. Interestingly, unusual type of tenure has been introduced in the business renting area which is key money; paying an amount of money for the shop and lower monthly installments as rent (Interviewee: Diab 2013). Syrian families were often found to share accommodation with other families in order to stay in certain preferred areas. Equally, moving 'down-market' was observed for middle class groups who were forced to lower their living standards (and their areas of residence) with the depletion of their resources.

#### **4.2.3 Security concerns,**

Security concerns among refugees were numerous and found to be crucial push/pull factors. A report on the situation of refugees shows that the transitional period (from February 2001 to June 2012 when there was no official government in Egypt) has been harsher on refugees (ibid). Refugees' vulnerable situation caused extra suffering; losing their jobs and being subject to street harassment and other types of violence. Today, reports on rape, pick pocketing, thefts and harassment of refugees have increased. Gender and sexual based violence are major push factors for certain families who have young girls and women. Some neighborhoods where many refugees live (not by choice but by necessity) have a stigma, or at least the reputation, of accommodating drug dealers, thugs, mafia-type power brokers and other dubious social types (public information: 2013). Refugees are also worried about security in areas close to the city centre or other hotspots where demonstrations, protests and other public uprisings have occurred (SC 2013). Rumors or reports about the continued and sometimes violent street unrest have also restricted refugees' mobility and range.

#### **4.2.4 Political background/setting,**

The political orientation from the Syrian uprising and the background of the refugees (even if refugees are not politicized) is interacting with the city's geopolitical spheres and modes of governance. Supporters of the Syrian uprising are made to feel more welcome in Egypt in the political and social settings of post revolution Islamist governance (before July 3rd shift of power). At the same time, poorer ones who are non-supporters of the uprising are less advantaged to access assistance as most of the host communities' channels are religious and have supportive attitudes towards anti-Assad groups. They consequently either hide in some spaces seeking anonymity and indirect channels of assistance or, the better-off among them can afford gated communities and protective forms of urban governance and are then obvious. Some refugees interviewed said that the presence of a large Syrian community visibly and volubly supporting the Syrian uprising was for them a strong push factor out of certain areas. The image drawn to show the way in which these groups perceive and avoid Sitta October (studied extensively in the section to follow) is distinctly different from the general normative opinion of it. As their numbers are much smaller than those who support the Syrian uprising (JNA 2012), they are mostly absent from many of the discussions around Syrian refugees in Egypt.

I have never been to Sitta October and feel like it is a place of pro-Syrian revolution groups which I do not want to approach: said a lady from Heliopolis



#### **4.2.5 Social connections/community cohesion,**

The refugees' backgrounds, prospects, class, religious and sectarian affiliation, profession, networks of contacts, earlier urban experience, and other factors influence their voluntary choice of a place of residence in the city of asylum, and sometimes the involuntary one. They tend to cluster themselves around specific commonalities and then formulate community cohesion pull factors (see sections (2.3), (2.4) in the literature review). The questionnaire findings showed that social networks within the studied areas were given high importance across the four areas. Yet, it was distinctively higher in smaller scale disadvantaged areas, namely Omraneya and Masaken Othman (67%, 76% respectively of respondents who have social networks).

Syrians from coastal cities tended to congregate in or near Alexandria. In Damietta, carpenters from Eastern Ghouta were attracted by the working environment of furniture manufacturing and were then joined by many others from their home area of residence (UNHCR Note on Syrians 2013). It was found that some Syrian groups targeted specific areas to live in Egypt because of familiarity and connections to their background. For example, Christian Syrians chose to settle in various places around Heliopolis and they are starting to form or join social structures, as most of those are middle class people who have previous social connections to the area. The presence of different types of migrant communities and church-based NGOs (such as the Greek Catholic social club and others), many minority Christian sects and a supportive social environment are for them important pull factors (see photos).

In other areas, people may gravitate towards areas where there are others of the same city of origin, even though they were not previously acquainted, similar to the way they are clustering in Sitta October as discussed in section (4.4.1).

#### **4.2.6 Access to livelihood options**

It is argued that “in urban centers refugees are offered a less disproportionately distributed and insufficient assistance which leads to higher degrees of self-sufficiency than those in camps” (Kobia and Cranfield 2009). Employment is one of the key aspects in making self-sufficiency possible for refugees and also contributes to creating ‘durable’ solutions. Due to the pressure and restrictions on the formal employment sector in Egypt, the informal sector is the target for most of refugees (Danielson 2012). The informal sector in Cairo is already tenuous- it has been overloaded by rural to urban migration and influxes of refugees. Refugees, nonetheless, have been engaged in different types of economic activities:

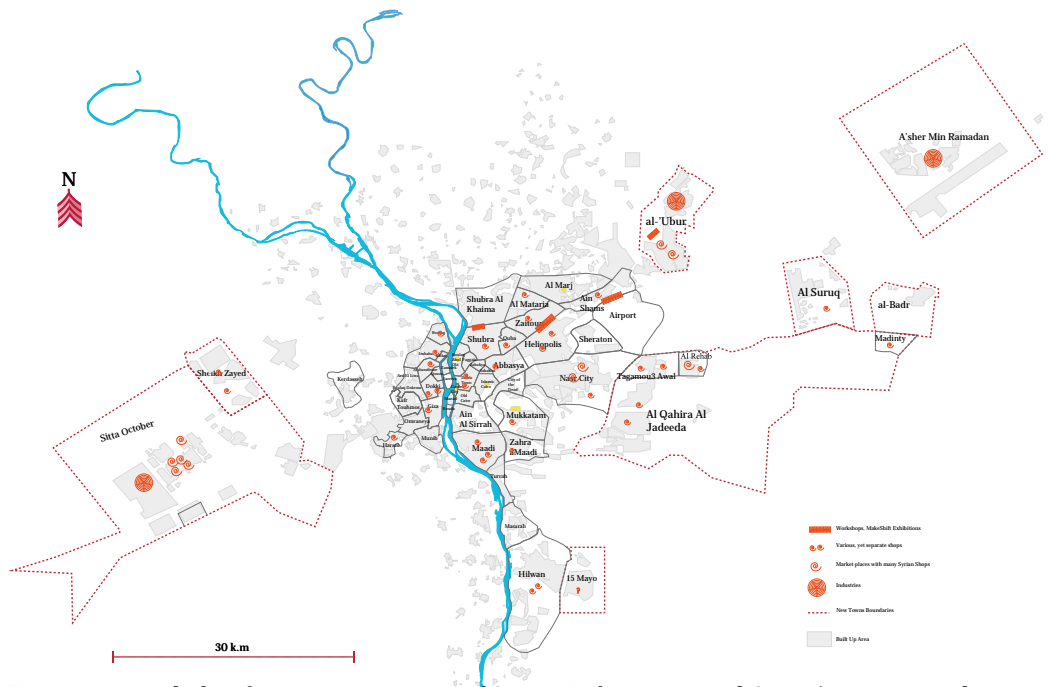


Figure15. Main hubs of economic activities of Syrian Refugees around Cairo (approximate locations) Source: Developed by Author based on (Sejourne & Sims 2009 cited in Sims 2011) and observations

**Business Establishments:** Some Syrians have been more visibly and successfully engaged in creating livelihood avenues than other refugee communities have done in Egypt and in Cairo, in a relatively short period of time (one year for a Syrian community). There are many reasons for this; some of them related to historical economic relationships between the two countries and now evident in some well-known Shamy merchandise in Cairo (such as Quaider sweet shops and Mardini textile). There is also a widespread perception among Egyptians that Syrian products and food items are of good quality and so these businesses do not struggle for customers. Today, Syrian shops, restaurants, workshops, make-shift exhibitions and temporary markets are dispersed in different places across Cairo (See figure15. for the larger hubs of economic activities) with many types of products, especially food items and textiles. In addition, some informal vending and other types of self-employed activities have also started up, indicating the creation of local supply chains in a very competitive market.

On a different level, Syrians have set up small industries, from transnational franchises to manufacturing workshops in many areas around the city . Some of them imported all materials and equipment and are employing Syrians sometimes as well as Egyptians. Their main areas of concentration are the industrial cities of 'Ubur, Sitta October and 'Asher min Ramadan, Gisir al Swees and Hirafeyean.

It is interesting to see the emergence of these economic activities, originating in areas where Syrians live, and then expanding or relocating to other areas according to market dynamics (observations 2013). There is also a marked tendency to advertise the Syrian identity of the establishment. The great majority of the new shops, restaurants and other economic activities carry names referring to Syria as a marketing strategy to differentiate them from Egyptian businesses and to attract Egyptians to the Syrian merchandise through their supportive attitude to the Syrian cause.

I have moved everything from my factory in Aleppo to Cairo; staff, machines and supplies and set another factory in the industrial city of Sitta October. My clients are from the Arab world as I do filling and packing machines, importing basic components from Europe and selling machines for much cheaper prices than Europe and in better quality than Chinese. I have also managed to have some Egyptian food-manufacturers as clients: Says Mr. Ahmad

**Employment Opportunities:** Syrians of lower economic capabilities who are not self-employed have to seek temporary waged employment opportunities. A big segment of the Syrian community either does not have access to jobs or are employed as day laborers or in non-stable jobs with exploitative wages. Reported unemployment rates were high, reaching more than 70% in the exclusionary housing project of Masaken Othman, while it was slightly less than 50% in the informal settlement of Faisal (SC 2013). Areas of employment in the informal sector were mostly in transport, construction, delivery, even essential services such as clinics, teaching centers, vendors and other non-registered activities and this has also been widely observed in Sitta October and U'bur.

Another segment of the Syrian community is the skilled and highly educated class such as doctors, engineers, etc. In fact, there is a crisis among middle-class and professional Syrians who do not have "formal" avenues to work in their professions and it is more difficult for them to compromise by working at another job, or to lower their living standards (Interviewee Dr. Anas 2013). It has been noticed that employment sector compromise and hopping in between different places in search of work is more common among refugees of lower economic capabilities and non-professional backgrounds than middle class ones.

Economic considerations and employment opportunities were found among the important factors influencing the choice of a particular area of residence. The following section will discuss one of the clustering mechanisms among Syrians in Cairo.

### 4.3 How to locate in a specific area? Mechanisms of Dispersion and clustering

In this section, one of the ways in which refugees are received in specific urban environments of Cairo is illustrated. It is important to note the impossibility of acknowledging all ways of reception. Hence, this one is very common and of key importance to understanding causal factors behind settling in to some areas around Cairo. It shows simply how refugees get attracted by an iconic mosque which is both a well-known landmark, and famous for the charity that it dispenses to the poor. Syrians have been directed to go there immediately upon arrival in Egypt, and they have tended to settle in the area surrounding it forming community cohesion pull factor (See figure 16.)

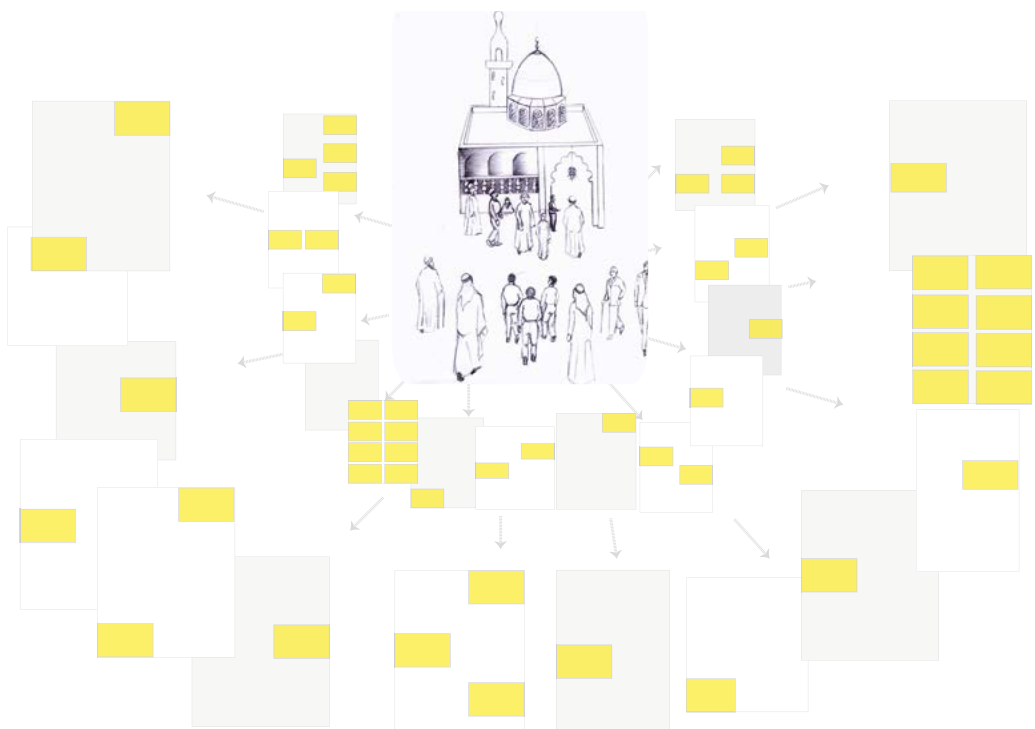
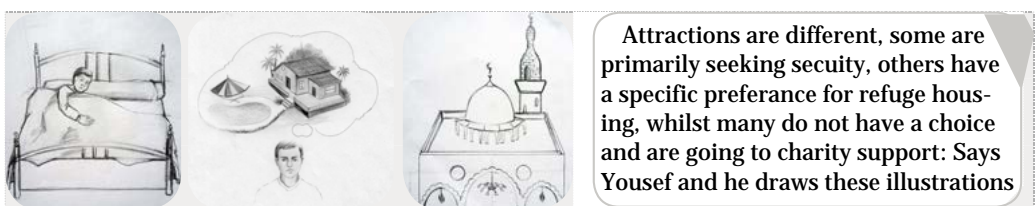


Figure16. An illustration of one of the mechanisms of clustering in specific neighbourhoods  
Source: Author (based on primary data)



## 4.4 The Making of Communities: A refugee cityscape

### 4.4.1 Little Syria in Sitta October

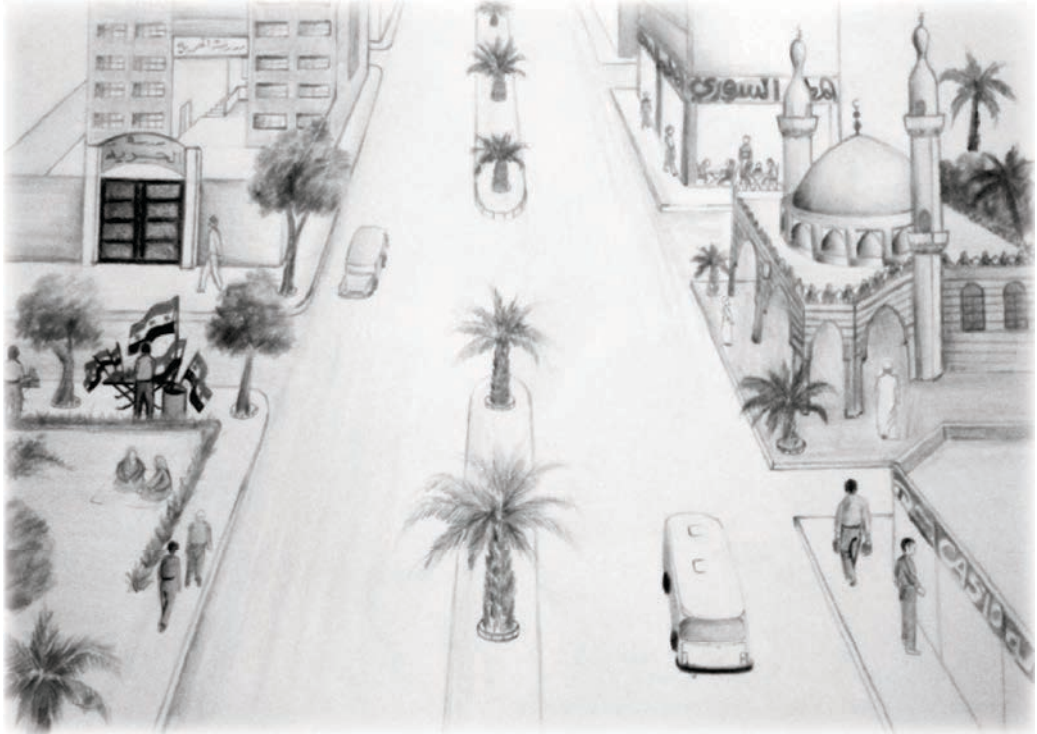


Figure17. An Imaginary drawing of Sitta October by one of the refugees before seeing it  
Source: (Yousef Haj 2013)

Sitta October is one of the satellite cities developed in Cairo since 1981 under the New Urban Communities Administration (NUCA) which had been part of the economic reform and structural adjustment in Egypt (Wahdan 2012). The area had been designated as an industrial zone and later with diverse residential options (from gated enclaves to public housing) and is conceptualized in the public culture in Egypt as a clean and ordered space for those who wished to escape the congestion of Cairo (Sims 2011). Twenty five years after its construction, Sitta October had 142.000 dwelling units in 2006 and had an occupancy rate of 37% occupied units (ibid.). Some 154.093 persons lived in it (CAMPAS, Sitta October governorate census, 2008 cited in Wahdan 2012). Recently, it has been dubbed as little Syria, on account of the large Syrian refugee community settled there. Estimates suggest more than 30.000 Syrians were living there and in the nearby Sheikh Zayed city by the end of May 2012, making around 15% of the total population in these areas. It also hosts many Iraqi refugees and smaller numbers of Somalis, Sudanese and other refugees. Sitta October is one hub which shows

direct solidarity with the revolutionists in Syria (interviewee: Abu Nidal 2012). It is interesting to see that the majority of the Syrians arriving inevitably at the north-eastern side of the city made journeys to the opposite side of this city, instead of settling nearer. The area is not a classic port of arrival as many refugee settlement areas are.

Sitta October has many of the pull factors as discussed earlier, and a few formed that initial attraction: the image of a new town with clean and organized streets, relatively lower real estate prices in comparison to other new towns such as New Cairo (Anon a 2011), and the many Syrian students who lived there while studying in private universities (Sitta October University and Misr University for Science and Technology). Later, the area got schooling facilities for Syrian children and many Syrian-specific services. The ongoing influxes of refugees have resulted in changing modes of use of public space and have brought many thriving economic activities to the relatively under-utilized, under-served city. It is interesting to note that NUCA's financial feasibility was previously shaky due to failure to attract residents and lack of public amenities (Wahdan 2012). Today, Syrians who live in Sitta October come from different walks of life, including some politicized sectarian minorities, and many of them are supporters of the Syrian uprising.



Figure18. Few photos of places where Syrians can be found in Sitta October. From above: Syrian School 7th district, Housari Mosque, 6th district and Housari Market  
Source: Author

#### 4.4.1.1 Clustering within Sitta October,

Syrians in Sitta October and the neighbouring Sheikh Zayed are dispersed over the different districts following their economic profile, class, city of origin, background and political engagement. The majority follow family networks (Interviewees: Diab and Abu Ammar 2013). They group themselves in a way that corresponds to these compositions and commonalities. Sitta October has been a haven for the first arrivals from the Syrian crisis- most of whom were from Homs and had come in family and extended family groups and clustered around the 7th district, or from the Damascus countryside who started to cluster themselves in 1st, 2nd and 7th districts back in January 2012 (ibid.). Today, Syrian communities are found around 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 7th and 8th districts and in less concentration in the 3rd, 4th and 6th districts (where poorer groups live as the 6th district has more public housing) (See figure 19.). Some claimed to be (civil society) activists, while sectarian and minority groups are also assumed to have settled on the edges of these durable clusters. The better-off groups are dispersed in many other districts and gated enclaves of the area. However, the extent to which these groups have made communities has not been yet tested and it seems that family connections and acquaintances from the same city of origin formed the main drivers for clustering. The following section studies the city centre and describes some of the changes that have occurred in the use of public spaces, brought about primarily by refugees' arrivals and needs.

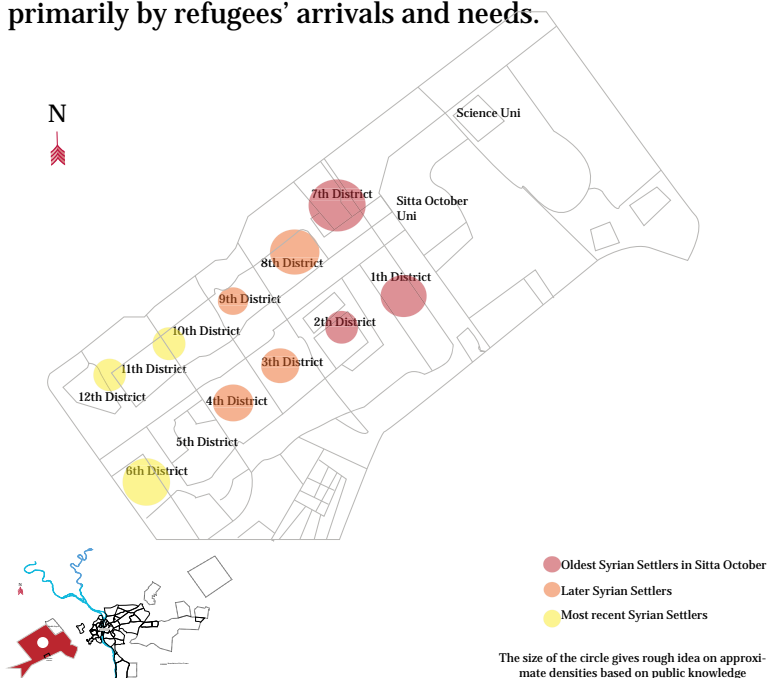


Figure19. The dispersion of Syrians around Sitta October districts  
Source: developed by Author based on Sitta October district website



#### 4.4.1.2 A social, economic and political hub in the city centre

Urban spaces, when occupied by huge concentrations of refugees, show expressions in spatial and use terms similar to the ones in refugee camps (Hurz no date). They translate politics, identities, cultural values and relationships into space and bring in or re-create activities that develop a sense of community (ibid). The city centre of Sitta October has developed new uses for its public places and expanded its current ones. Today, after more than a year of constant influxes, it has developed an image of being hospitable and accessible for the Syrians, and becomes more crowded and busy with new sets of uses (see photos).

Al Hosari Area, a central focus for different activities, has developed into a socio-economic, cultural and political hub for the Syrian refugee community and the Egyptians. Its development would have been different in use, shape and pace without the increasing number of Syrians entering the area and their unstated determination to make it a place where they could congregate. In the course of 7 months, Housari area underwent transformations that were not foreseen or anticipated by the planning and city administration (Interviewee: Ms. Al Akhras 2013). There has been an evolution of different sociopolitical and economic activities, resulting in an encroachment into the streets and public spaces with stress on identity, and a lot of appropriation strategies in the built environment (see photos). The informal sector is clearly present in this area through a lot of vending, transport and other service activities. To sum, the area has undergone a huge change in its use patterns and cycles of use of these patterns:

Reported Types of Changes to Housari Area (See figure 20.)	
Development of new uses:	a. Diverse vending activities in the area surrounding the Housari mosque which developed in the last few months , b. Many new economic activities started up in the nearby malls and markets and in the areas connecting them, c. Many relief agencies and companies opened their offices inside the nearby mall buildings, d. Political parties (such as Mwataneh) established their activity offices inside the office buildings.



<p>Extending and intensifying the already existing uses:</p>	<p>a. The mosque functions as a religious, charitable and social centre and has become a reception centre for the refugees,  b. The adjacent health centre and the public spaces in front of it expands for women to sit, socialize and further vend (see photos),  c. The established permanent booths selling food items by the mosque and their revived uses as selling points,  d. More types and numbers of transportation vehicles connecting inside Sitta October and to the city centre (bus, mini-bus, shared taxi, motorcycle taxis and tuktuks),</p>
<p>An emphasized role for Housari Park (100 meters from the Mosque)</p>	<p>as a focal point for the Syrian community where they gather in the evenings and have developed an information centre to know about different Syrian activities and opportunities for employment, study, accommodation etc.</p>

Table 2. Reported Changes and new developments of economic activities in Housari area

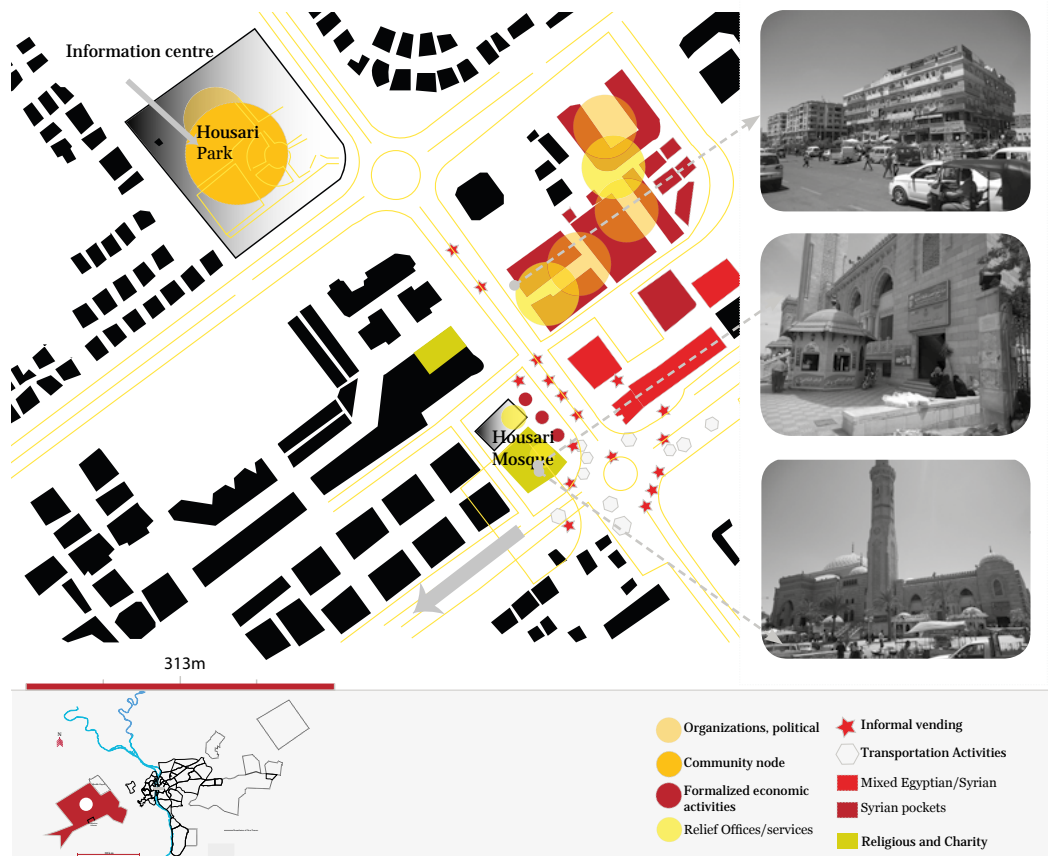


Figure 20. Development of different activities in Housari area, Sitta October

The general atmosphere of this space and its surroundings, the many “little Syria” pockets within it, provide a “virtual Syria” experience. It is not only a centre for Syrians in Sitta October but also a perceived centre for the Syrians in and around Cairo. Some people come from other places to buy Syrian items and food from this place.

As the area is a hub of informal sector activities with a heavy multi-use of the urban space, it represents varying economic profiles of the clients and users and is evident on the presence of poorer residents.

#### **4.4.1.3 Control over the space,**

Before romanticizing the way Al Housari area is presented as a “common public” space of a collective identity reclaimed by the Syrians in Sitta October to establish a shared ‘common ground’, it is important to be aware of the relationships created by and within that space. It actually represents modes of control over public space. The space is “governed” by the existence of “al Housari Mosque” which represents much more than a religious institution for the refugees. It is one of the landmarks (iconic mosques) which attracted Syrian refugees through its charitable programs and access to support channels. It functions as both a reception centre and as a care giver: many charity-related and other activities take place within it. At the same time, it has been subject of extensive accusations on involvement in more dubious transactions, such as arranged early marriages for Syrian girls (Salloum 2013) and it controls, as a huge (private) sector charity, the uses of the surrounding spaces. “Unwanted” people and “behaviors” are not allowed by orders from the mosque authorities . So, perhaps not surprisingly, and in a very similar way to that which the discussion around governance issues in regards to allowing space for activism is brought about in chapter 6, ostensibly public space here shows similar symptoms of latent surveillance and control.

#### **4.5 Journeys within different urban areas,**

Freemantle (2010), talking about migrants to the city, argues that “people normally maintain feet in multiple sites without firmly rooting themselves in any” as they seek security, better livelihood avenues and networks (cited in Landau 2012). This section is intended to provide an overview of mobility among Syrian refugees in navigating through geopolitical spheres of the city. Like all refugees, they naturally experience disruptions in their lives post arrival in the host country and are subject to continuous movement between different urban areas in the country and around the city. Many intra-Cairo journeys were reported with the time spent and reasons behind such frequent moves in order to get a sense

of the dynamics and motives and outlook for future scenarios. These journeys were traced following individual cases (which could be repeated) and some group journeys where many refugees have followed the same trend to move from/to specific areas.

As discussed earlier, poorer groups reported more adventurous journeys and experimental moves than better-off groups. In Rehab gated city, Syrians who are assumed to be better off reported fewer risk-potential types of journeys and that they would go to

In five months, we moved four times till I found a job and an accommodation and a job which is relatively not far and cheap. Yet, my work is ad hoc and I do not know what is waiting for us in the future" Said Abu Abud from Homs.

Madinty (a new city-suburb developed by the same developer as Rehab yet with relatively cheaper rents due to its state of under-construction) when they moved from Rehab. Many reported having other coping strategies such as sharing apartments in order not to make the move out of their preferred area. Nevertheless, some have moved to areas which are cheaper and nearer to city activities such as Maadi and Nasr City.

The movements of poorer groups were reported to be more risky and speculative; some were a continual search for cheaper rents, others were pushed out by the exhaustion of charity resources in the areas where they were living. For example, many families moved from their first place of residence, Omraneya informal settlement to other Egyptian cities in search of work and charity support and to Ain Shams informal areas where they discovered networks to charity.

Many journeys are made towards the area of Sitta October and Sheikh Zayed. Groups of new arrivals settle for a transitional period in inner areas of Cairo or share apartments with relatives, then gravitate to the Sitta October Satellite city, some others move from informal settlements (such as Boulaq) towards Sitta October whenever they can afford that (as Sitta October has started to have higher rents and tightening of options for rents). Few reported reverse journeys (i.e. away from the area of Sitta October), except for those families with children registered in Egyptian public universities, who sought accommodation nearby. A few also had a push factor of not being attracted to the idea of living in such a big Syrian community.

With the current turmoil in Cairo and Egypt and the change of attitude towards the Syrian refugees, many refugees reported intentions to move where they can congregate with other Syrians, seeking intra-Syrian community protection mechanisms. Figure 21. shows some of the reported individual and group journeys in an attempt to overlay stations of journeys to urban form (i.e. informal

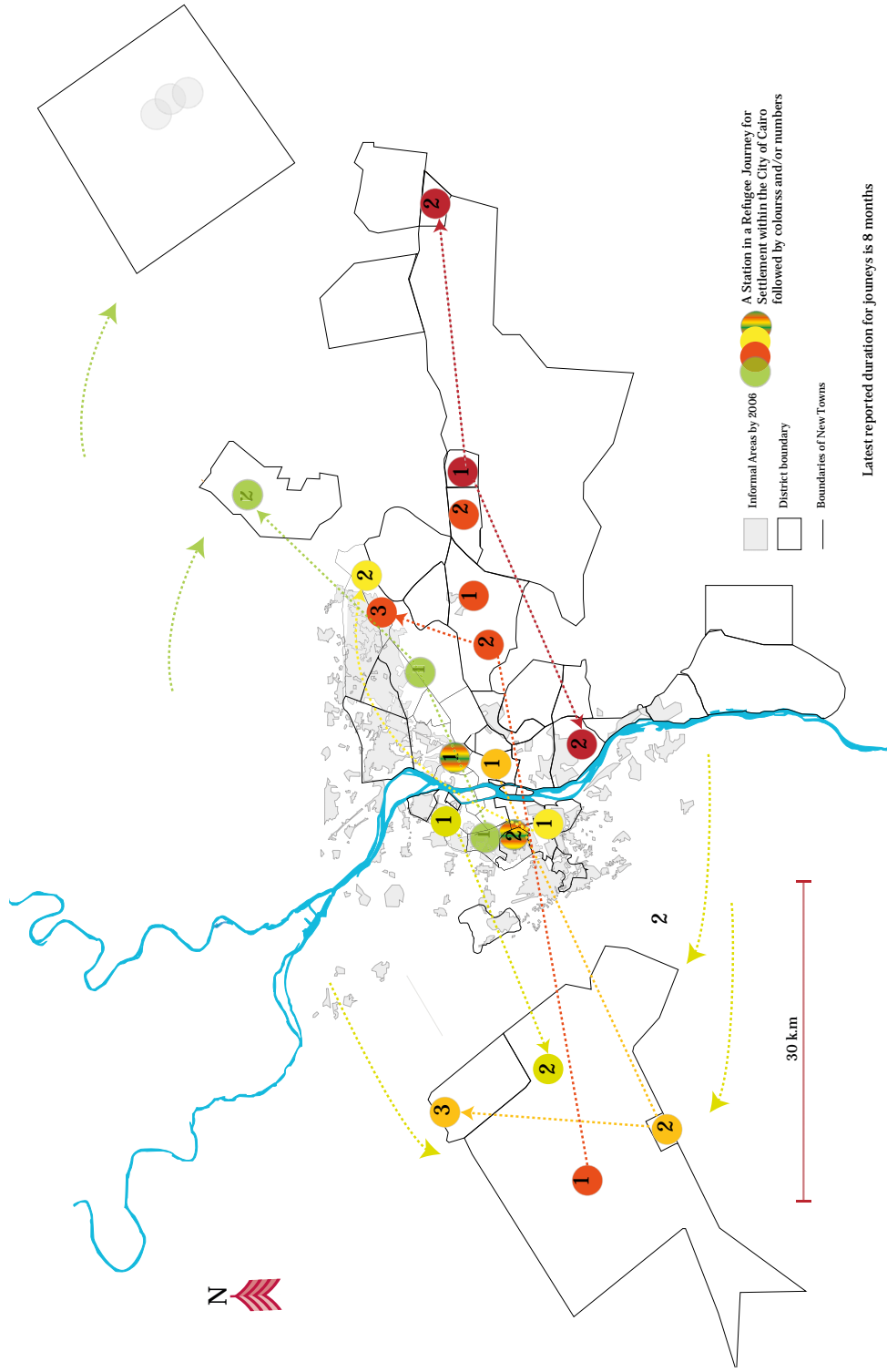


Figure 21. Syrian refugees journeys around Cairo's spaces  
 Source: Developed by Author based on (Sejourne & Sims 2009 cited in Sims 2011 based on primary data

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Examining the ways in which the Syrian refugees have grasped the geopolitical spheres of Cairo and started to position themselves within them is a task which calls for extensive empirical work and understanding of the city's urban spaces, housing supply, rental market and avenues to employment and business activities with the modes of governance in these spaces. It is yet, as still evolving, an interesting and challenging task. The city's options are being valued, compared and accessed in diverse ways, relative to and influenced by many push and pull factors. These factors are important key aspects in developing an understanding of the ways in which Cairo responds to the demand of refugee influxes, sometimes fulfilling those demands, and at other times, not meeting their needs. The multi-factored reasons behind settlement in specific areas are also over-layered by the influence of the turbulent political and social situation of Cairo.

However, as more than a year has passed since the arrival and settlement of large numbers of Syrian refugees in Cairo, some changes on the built environment have started to show, bringing about urban and social development through socio-economic and cultural activities into the previously under-utilized satellite cities of Cairo. And thus directly influencing the rental market and raising real-estate values in these areas. The hubs of activities created by concentrations of refugees demonstrate embodied political tensions and modes of participation in spatial and socio-economic terms. They play an important role in promoting a sense of vibrant and fragile displaced community among the refugees, allowing them to express their collective identity and their semi-autonomous social and political activism which is affected by the political structures and participation modes of Egypt and of their area of residence in particular.



## **Chapter 5**

**Separate Refugee Communities in  
between Exclusionary Housing Projects,  
Gated Communities and Informal  
Settlements,**





## **Introduction**

**B**earing in mind the factors related to the voluntary and involuntary selection of a place for settlement and the dynamics behind moving between spaces, a closer look into three urban areas is provided in this chapter. It aims at studying typologies of urban forms in the geopolitical spheres of Cairo where considerable numbers of Syrian refugees are settled today, and investigating the influence of local politics and structures of governance on specific aspects related to “protection” of the refugees in these spaces. The three areas have been selected among paradigmatic urban typologies where urban citizenship and belonging are said to be embedded in either “control” zones or “no law” ones in order to rethink “protection space” within these organizations in the city (Al Sayyad and Roy 2006). An “informal settlement”, an “exclusionary housing project” and a “gated city” are introduced in their contexts, and described from the refugees’ point of view. The factors underlying the mechanisms of providing protection when reproduced on the local level are also presented. The chapter closes with explanatory and comparative discussions of the functions of urban spaces beyond merely provision of shelter to open the possibility for further research on these issues.

### **5.1 What brings Syrians from the three selected Areas into a common ground?**

The social relationships between the groups of refugees living in these three areas are not inevitable as the areas represent very different trends for the urbanization modes of the city, and paradoxically are then connected. The gated city represents the neo-liberal production of spaces of isolation that are based on the “security risk discourse” (Denis 2006). As a megacity, the theory that the socio-economic and political processes of neo-liberalism have created what is called spaces of decay and privileged spaces can be easily applied to Cairo (Candan and Kolluglu 2008). Informal settlements are part of those “spaces of decay”. The byproduct of them is the type of exclusionary housing projects that have been created to compensate the displaced from informal areas. Syrian refugees of these urban spaces come together by their “similar” “protection needs” but totally separated by urban geographies which could only be simultaneously approached through the conceptual thinking of planners.

As Syrians do not need visas to enter or live in Egypt, their protection concerns

are not related to their legal status (until July 8th as a shift in this policy has happened and has been declared to be temporary). Protection and Protection space have been discussed in the literature review in (chapter 2), and it will be discussed in subsequent sections as :

Protecting refugees from the pressures and tensions experienced in a specific area of residence, which influences their feelings of security and safety, and may also cause arbitrary evictions and movements.

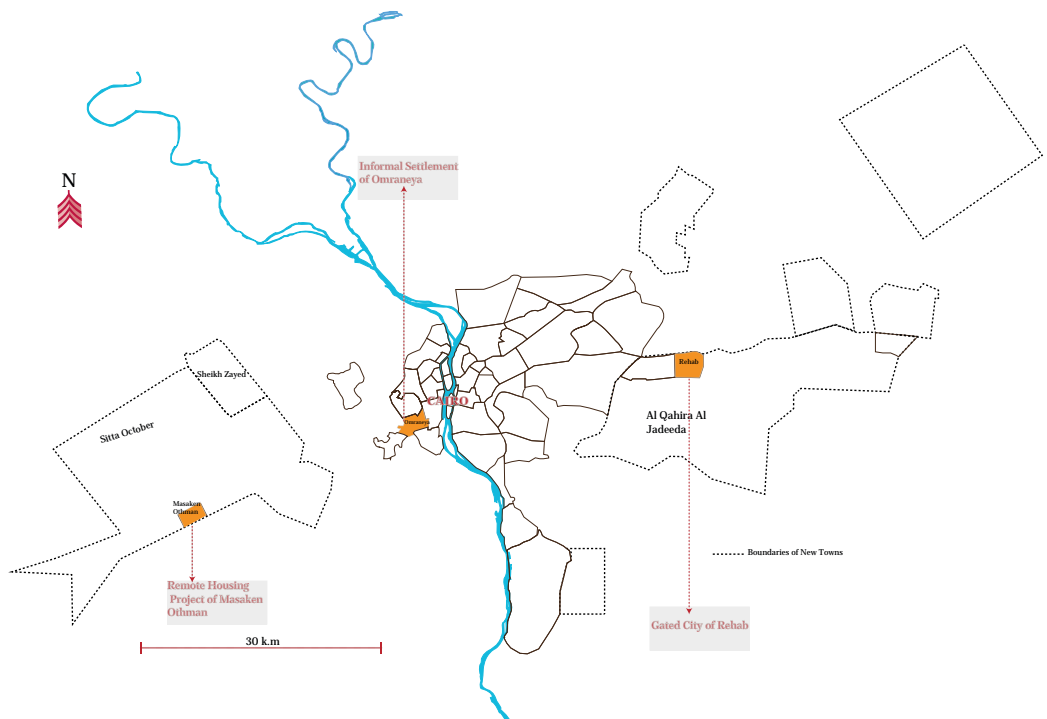


Figure22. Map of Case Studies Masaken Othman, Rehab and Omraneya in Cairo  
Source: Developed by Author based on (Sejourne & Sims 2009 cited in Sims 2011)

## 5.2 Particular places of Refuge: The Exclusionary Housing Project of Masaken Othman

### 5.2.1 Background information on the area

The most needed housing projects are a nation-wide planning paradigm to compensate for the loss of homes of groups of Egyptians in informal settlements (Karam 2012). The homes of these groups have been either demolished due to public works projects or are designated as being deteriorated and unsafe for habitation. The housing project in the focus of this study is located on the fringes of Sitta October satellite city and was initiated 5 years ago. The original plan

was to construct 14,000 apartments of the average size of 42 square meters (Interviewee Ms. Al Akhras 2013). 7000 apartments have been completed and delivered by the first contracting company (*Othman Co. Ltd.*); after which the area was named. According to an interview with local real estate offices in Othman, after a short period, more than half of the residents went back to where they had traditionally lived, where they had access to the informal economy. They left behind a huge number of empty apartments for sale or rent (interviewee: Ahmad 2013). Subsequently, most of these flats were sold or rented to groups who work in the nearby industrial city (ibid.). The Egyptian groups who remain in the area are heterogeneous; they come from different informal settlements in Cairo. They attempt to find work through locally developed intra-area economic activities or through the Sitta October industrial city's employment or other options.

A faith-based organization has established its charitable works and set up an office in a local mosque in Sitta October called "Al Khulafa'a al Rashideen" in which reception of Syrian refugees takes place (since October 2012). Newly arrived Syrians are registered in the office and allocated empty flats in this housing project rent free. Around 250 families were living in the area by end of May, 2013. However, and starting from May 2013, the Syrians will be hosted for free for the first 3 months and then they will have to start paying rent as a result of the increasing numbers and the depletion of the resources of the organization (Interviewee: Jalil 2013). Rents are much lower here than they are in the central areas of Sitta October and still less than in other public projects. An unfurnished flat here costs 250 L.E (42\$) a month, while it costs 450 L.E (65\$) in the public housing project of Bait al 3ailah and from 800 L.E. (110\$) upward in Sitta October. Rent values in this area have not risen as empty flats are still available and the renting process is controlled by one organization and in mass.



Figure23. From Al Khoulafaa al Rashidine Mosque to Masken Othman  
Source: Mohamad al Omar 2012, Author

### **5.2.2 The socio-urban characteristics of the urban space from the refugees' point of view:**

The findings of the questionnaires show that the majority of the Syrian residents reported difficulties and hardships related to mobility, accessibility, integration, reputation and to livelihood avenues. Masaken Othman has a negative image among the Egyptian community as a place where the “*Sukan Al Ashwaiyat*” “informal settlements’ residents” are thought to be drug dealers, thugs and criminals, a view which now includes Syrian residents of the area. This has placed extra stress on the Syrians and is causing a breakdown in relationships between the two groups. The answers to the research questions further revealed the fact that urban services are unsatisfactory, and public transportation was inadequate. A common complaint was that no public transportation connects the area to Sitta October, and only Tuk Tuks travel until early evening.

The Syrians living in Masaken Othman are mostly from Damascus country side (few from peri-urban areas) and inner city districts of Damascus (Sbeneh, Boustan al Dour, Kifr Souseh, Midan, etc...) and from Alep-

Without having our relatives surrounding us here, we would have gone crazy, as the area in the evening is like a remote big prison” Said a lady who lives in Masaken Othman

po with a few Palestinian Syrians and some from other Syrian cities. So, social networking is high. The pull factor of community cohesion and specifically family union had an important role in bringing them together. It has been revealed that it is more difficult for people who do not have relatives nearby to stay in this area. Most of the urban adaptations and appropriation strategies discussed with the refugees were related to domestic issues more than urban problems per se (see photos in Appendix 8). Syrians from Masaken Othman were going to Sitta October mainly to speak to other Syrians in the Housari Park and other places, more often than they were socializing within this space. Only a few men’s gatherings at a local Egyptian café have been reported.

Residential mobility (the turnover of the inhabitants) has been reported as high. 600 families came to the area; to date 350 of them left to other places and 250 are still there and the oldest length of stay was 5 months with many new arrivals.

### **5.2.3 Governance structure and refugee protection in the post Revolution Era**

The faith-based organization mentioned above has its own criteria for accepting Syrians into the areas it controls or not. The organization has also been influential in allowing other organizations/entities to step in to work in the areas where

they accommodate Syrians. A relationship between this organization and some groups inside Syria was evident, as it was reported that many adult men arrived on their own, in order to recover their health, and then return to Syria via Turkey. It seemed clear that the involvement of this organization in the Syrian situation is not limited to providing accommodation for new arrivals in the housing project. The scope of their support is huge, and raises questions about their funds and resources which no longer seem sufficient to sustain the increasing numbers of refugees.

Protection of the Syrian refugees is affected primarily by this faith-based organization which literally “governs” the refugees’ stay in a “patronage type of protection”. The organization provides accommodation, basic furniture and basic food items (these are distributed periodically), and link this dependence to the provision of protection against eviction. The situation is somewhat similar in a way to the way the humanitarian agencies govern over refugee camps. Yet, the refugees’ legitimate concerns of livelihood opportunities and of a socially and psychologically supportive asylum experience have alienated many refugees in this area. The families with young girls and women had extra protection concerns given the stigma of the area and the unrest that took place there after the Egyptian revolution (Karam 2012). The Egyptian residents of this area have been accused for trouble making in Alharam public housing and they are connected to activism of “displaced groups” in Cairo who organized many protests and established committees to advocate for their right not to be moved from the inner areas of the city (ibid.). So, the situation in general in Masaken Othman seems unstable. Restricted outdoor mobility (i.e. staying inside their flats) has therefore been the security strategy for the Syrians who do not have any other option than to stay there.

The Egyptian communities who congregate in this space come from different inner Cairo areas, which make the area of Masaken Othman unsettled and lacking in traditional social networking activities common in informal settlements. This absence of locally knitted social solidarity relationships influences the residential environment and more time is needed before a more protective communal atmosphere is developed. Fears of the emergence of new political or social problems cause stress, uncertainties and suspicion among the refugees. However, the neighbourhood itself looks like a “bare life” zone and their potential space of outward mobility provided a vent. Interesting to note that host/guest dichotomy is not much felt here between both groups as they both are “displaced”. Given the proximity of another settlement area and of options to move out of Masaken Oth-

man, some refugees left as soon as they could. But many, and the most vulnerable, do not dare to take that risk.

### **5.3 Particular Places of Refuge: The Gated City of Rehab,**

#### **5.3.1 Background information on the area:**

Rehab is one of the privately developed gated cities located inside New Cairo satellite city approximately 20 K.M from downtown Cairo. It accommodates around 200.000 people (Marafi 2011). According to the head of the city's administration, Rehab should not be classified as a compound as although it is a gated city, it is very accessible by visitors (interviewee: Mayor 2013). Housing in Rehab and in other gated communities is commonly rented by better-off groups. Denis (2006) argues that the movement of people into gated communities is linked to the "security risk discourse" which associates an image of poverty, criminality, disorder, pollution, and even terrorism with many parts of the city and its poorer inhabitants. The "Other" is not welcome in such neighbourhoods and is usually a synonym for people from "informal settlements" or "poorer groups" and the gated city is segregated and detached from the city (Marafi 2011). Only like-minded people of the same "class" share this space.

#### **5.3.2 The socio-urban characteristics of the urban space as per the refugees' point of view**

Rehab is occupied by Syrians who come from similar settings in Syria. The questionnaire findings revealed that most of the Syrian residents of Rehab had lived in the more expensive urban spaces in both Damascus and Aleppo; 96% of respondents were in this category (see appendix 3). They felt most comfortable in such an urban environment where public services are of high quality, clean and organized. It isolates them from the problems of Cairo and the congestion, dirt and pollution they heard about and saw in other parts of the city. Most importantly, they are protected by the on-site security services, and by the high walls, which although this style of living is new to them, they appreciate the fact that they are further removed from the unwelcome residents of the city.

The Syrians living in Rehab have started to form some community nodes in the central area of the city where the food court is located and have developed their channels to access education, supported by some NGOs inside Rehab and created internet pages to facilitate communication among them (on Facebook).

Some refugees have also registered with the UNHCR and are receiving support, as not all of those who live in Rehab are, as commonly perceived, rich. Some

families share apartments just in order to stay in this area. Many Syrian economic activities have started to appear in the city's market place and mall.

### **5.3.3 Governance structure and refugee protection in the post-Revolution Era**

The private Administration of Rehab refused to allow me to conduct the research even when they saw the formal letter from the university. They were the only municipal Administration which enquired about the researcher's political views. They attributed that to their wish to avoid any kind of conflict that might happen between the groups they hosted in the area- pro or anti Assad, as they phrased it. The security services section which is located inside the Administration office wanted also to meet with me. They were reluctant to allow me to enter, and said that even Egyptian residents of their city were not allowed to hang signs for Egyptian presidential elections, although the area had more than 60% supporters of Shafiq; the presidential candidate who is affiliated with the old Mubarak regime. They reported there had been conflicts between pro- and anti-Syrian regime groups and that they would not allow more. They were aware of the fact that there were more anti-regime residents than pro-regime, and that this tension could result in conflicts at any moment. The political participation in the revolution and post- revolution protests of the residents of Rehab has been studied by Marafi (2011) who reported very limited spaces for political activism and participation.

The privatized security and municipal administration are keen on providing an environment of equal protection opportunities for all residents without threatening the overall security concerns of the gated city. Accordingly, a refugee here is 'protected' as long as he or she can afford to pay for the security services provided and as long as his/ her behavior is acceptable. Entry and residence in the area is based on "civic extortion" as Landau (2012) calls some similar migrant spaces in Kenya: "If you can pay, you can come in and stay" (Landau 2012: 13). The political background of those who seek refuge in Rehab is not only varied but it is also obvious. Pro Syrian regime groups can afford to settle in Rehab given their financial capacities to buy security services and protection. Political participation and expressions are limited as this type of urban residence is constituted through "control zones" with elaborate forms of surveillance and policing (Al Sayyad and Roy 2006). The similarities between residents sharing this space are mainly due to class background, or more precisely, to economic capabilities than to political affiliation.

The Rehab Administration discussed some approved and disapproved activities and changes that were brought to the area with the influxes of refugees. Most were tolerated as the revenues that the refugees bring are also important: rent and real estate values and thriving economic activities) (interviewee: Mr. Abdul Aziz 2013).

We do not like that some Syrians behave inappropriately to sit on the grass in public open spaces and they tend to make noise when they share flats and have big numbers and therefore we have to convey our concern to some of them : Said Mr. Abdul Aziz from city hall in Rehab

Young girls and women in Rehab tended to congregate within the gated city, usually at the community node (next to the food court and around the fountains) and to roam through the different spaces in the gated city freely, which demonstrates their sense of comfort and security in using the public space. The way the Syrians gather in the evening around the fountains of the food court was not common before and although it is thought to be a rather vulgar activity by some Egyptians, it definitely shows their enjoyment of public spaces within Rehab in a secure way.



Figure24. Different places in Rehab where Syrians could be found  
Source: Al Omar and Author 2013



## **5.4. Particular Places of Refuge: The Informal settlement of Ommaney**

### **5.4.1 Background information on the area:**

Omraneya is one of the informal settlements developed on agriculture land in the western side of the city of Cairo in Giza governorate (Huzayyin *et al* 2009). It evolved as part of the urban sprawl of Cairo's metropolis to accommodate the arrival of thousands of migrant communities from the countryside since the 1970s (interviewee: Yousef 2013). The area accommodates approximately 800,000 Egyptians (statistics of the information centre of the district, 2013), a mixed population of Christians and Muslims. It is comprised of 8 informal districts (*Shiyeakhas*) and two others which have been formalized (i.e designated formally as a residential zone) and are considered to have higher real estate values.

Omraneya is administered by the local district council and the higher tier of the governorate of Giza (GoG). It has been one of the areas of study for implementing development projects through the ISUU (Informal Settlement Upgrading Unit) in the GoG, and extensive research on its socio-economic and social composition were conducted. Syrians are found living in a few administrative divisions inside the district (*Sidi Ammar and Traiseh shieakhas*) and these were the areas under study.

### **5.4.2 The socio-spatial characteristics of the urban space from the refugee's point of view**

The questionnaire answers revealed the fact that the refugees' attraction to this area was mainly related to the presence of support networks for Syrians, with the "Khatem al Mursaleen" iconic mosque, and later other mosques in the same area which form local focal points for clustering around. The first arrivals heard about these channels of support and then the next arrivals were also pulled towards this area by community cohesion. The Syrians living in this area cluster according to their ethnic origin. Although they come from different cities, basically peri-urban areas of Homs and Aleppo (see Appendix 3 for detailed findings), they were connected through their ethnic networks and intermarriages. They liked the accessibility of the area and the proximities of markets and other types of urban services. Many of their children were able to play outdoors in the (rural-like) urban environment with its semi or undeveloped open spaces. Yet, insecurity was a much repeated issue, and in particular, women's mobility was found to be limited. Their integration with the surrounding Egyptian community has been minimal. Adult men had access to informal sector employment such as in vending and day labor. They also reported high security concerns and exaggerated fears

of Egyptian riots, presence of potentially threatening groups and the crowded nature of the area as reasons behind their unease. Many refugees interviewed said they were aiming at moving to other areas (they repeatedly mentioned Faisal) which is a more organized and less chaotic informal area nearby.



Figure25. A Entire building of Syrians in Ormaneya  
Source: Al Omar 2013

### **5.4.3 Governance structures and Refugees' Protection in the post-Revolution era**

The social composition of Ormaneya developed through allocation of specific migrant communities who are originally from rural areas in Upper Egypt (Interviewee: Yousef 2013) to certain districts inside the area. Under this system, various kinds of political polarization and conflict potentials developed between kinship groups and family origins. The presence of a minority Christian community in a predominantly Muslim area adds more stress. Locals implicitly recognize the way in which the space is divided and organized, and are aware of the different socio-political power structures within those spaces.

It was found (See figure 26.) that community power brokers who were directly and indirectly connected to other power structures at the neighborhood level (faith-based channels of support, family and kinship affiliations) have had a major influence on refugee protection. Furthermore, there has been an influence of the geopolitical allocations of the social, religious, familial and kinship structures and other divisions within the area on the refugees. The Syrians have had to

position themselves within these forms of relationships and to seek “Protection by Power Brokers” which is then provided by alliances with corresponding groups of power brokers. These in turn were controlling and manipulating the “vulnerability” and “feelings of insecurity” of the refugees living in their domains. The “boys” working with them, in a specific café shop in the drawing below, have been “the protection guards” for the ones living nearby and for their place of social gatherings in the evening. Since the Egyptian revolution, cases of acquiring cheap weapons by community members, which were mainly stolen from the police centers in these areas, have been extensively reported which adds to the heightened sense of insecurity and threat (interviewee: Yousef 2013).

Women’s and girls’ mobility were also limited and thought to be insecure. They sought anonymity and safety by clustering around their ethnicity and coming together into communal spaces which should be “protected space”. Due to their non- Arab ethnic background, they were doubly segregated and influenced extensively by hidden “unpopular” political views. These factors were the main obstacles to integration.

Very few of these refugees were registered with the UNHCR, and their own mobility and ability to go back and forth to Syria were valued.

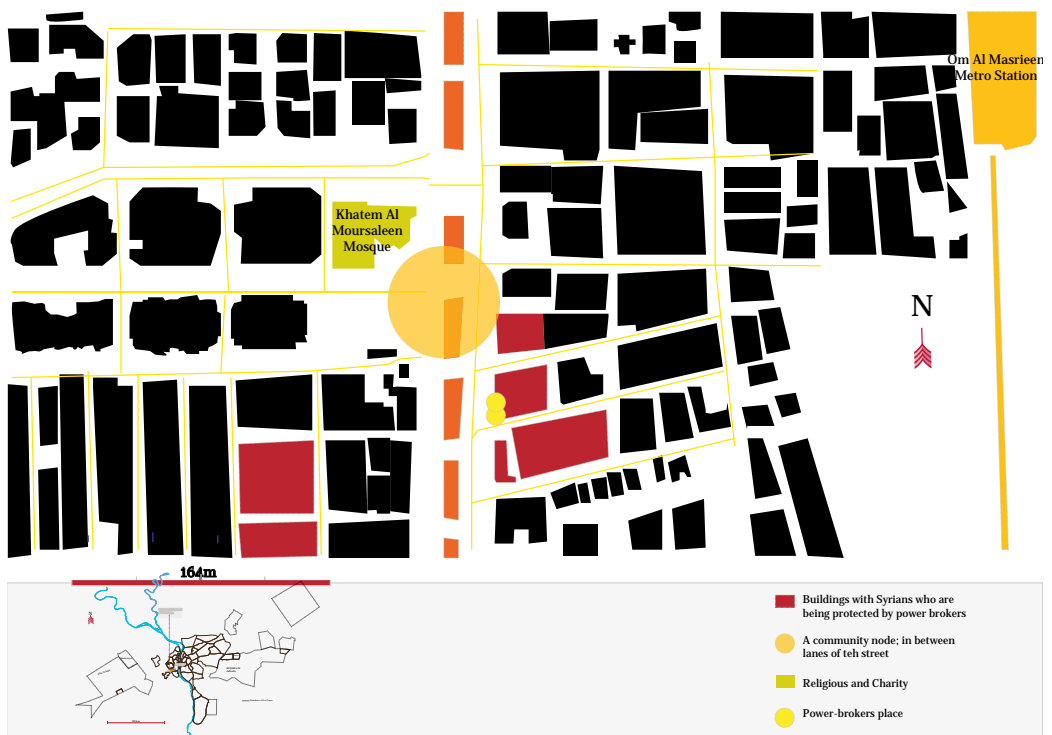


Figure26. Protected area under power brokers in Omraneya

## 5.5 Rethinking functions of urban geographies in response to refugees

Based on an understanding of each urban form that has been briefly discussed, it is noted that their functions are quite different for their Egyptian residents (the host community) than for the refugees. This functionality has been discussed extensively in the literature of migration; particularly the studies discussing the socio-political and economic profiles of transitory places (in- between places) in the city and their potentials; the ethnic neighborhoods, shanty towns and informal settlements, etc... (Saunders 2011). It is raised here with the aim of providing a better understanding of what is beyond physical choices; the ways in which the different forms of urban settings and their modes of governance act as a “refuge” and their complex socio-political, emotional and economic settings. The informal settlement of Omraneya is an “Arrival” city as it has been a receiving hub for rural migrants and as place where middle class residents gain an initial foothold before moving to other areas “upward mobility”, leaving space for new arrivals, thus creating chain migrations (ibid.). To summarize the different thoughts on the studied urban spaces, figure 26. presents a rap up of the main issues towards refugees. A topic for debate on Masaken Othman similar function to camps is raised in Appendix 4.

<p>Traditional societal structures of support are not there among host community, a heterogenous composition of displaced groups A controlled type of “protection” by a faith based entity the refugee presence among host community could raise feelings of</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Protection by “Patronage Type”</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Exclusionary Housing Project of Masaken Othman</b></p> <p>Sudden eviction and mobility concerns: is controlled by Faith community organization in a “get everything or nothing” way, the area is almost a “bare life” zone and forms an interesting social and political composition of intra-city displaced groups besides the Syrians.</p> <p>It maintains poorly tight social structures which adds loads on the emotional unrest besides</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Host/Guest Dichotomy not Obvious</b></p>	<p>Few local structures which are based on Wealthy family’s contributions have started to look after the groups in Rehab especially with middle class crisis and the depletion of their resources</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Protection by “Civic Extortion”</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The gated city of Rehab</b></p> <p>Privatized urban administration and security services provide the forms of protection as long as refugees afford to pay rents and maintain manners that are liked in the area.</p> <p>The social structures and the community based support are still emerging, yet not clear as in other areas such as Sitta October.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Host/Guest Dichotomy Obvious</b></p>	<p>Some assistance is provided by local community structures yet in a way in which the refugees have to position themselves into local societal power relations and structures.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Protection by “Power Brokers”</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The informal settlement of Omraneya</b></p> <p>Community power brokers who were directly and indirectly connected to other power structures on the neighborhood levels; have had a major influence on refugee protection.</p> <p>The Syrians had to position themselves into local structures of socio-political relationships and religious, familial and kinship affiliations to seek “protection by local power” which was then provided by allying with specific groups of power brokers. These in turn, were controlling and manipulating the “protection” and “feelings of security” of the refugees living in their domains. <b>Host/Guest Dichotomy Very Obvious</b></p>
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Figure 27. A summary on the three case studies protection mechanisms and compositions

## **5.6 Conclusions**

Urban modes of governance and forms of citizenships within the cities' different urban spaces are found to be influential on refugees' protection and living experiences in these spaces. The protection concerns and mechanisms have been discussed widely in the literature of refugees and within frameworks of humanitarian studies. However, the direct interaction of those forms on the level of urban governance has not yet been extensively investigated. The findings of three paradigmatic urban forms have shown the ways in which these local formal and informal relationships of power structures have a huge influence of refugees' settlement. Not only they were influential in determining the type of protection provided, but in some cases also controlled its mechanisms. The refugees have to navigate through what is beyond mere built environments, and still further through the established and evolving functions of these spaces within the framework of the city. They share spaces with "informal settlers" who were ambitious to move upward and some who had developed complex socio-political structures that maintained refugees within them. The gated city seems to have evolved as a means of extracting revenue in exchange for basic rights, which also enforced a low-profiled activism and "well-mannered" behavior. The third urban typology, the housing project, which seems undeveloped in terms of socio-economic and political structures yet maintains the potential for becoming a camp-like area for refugees with the patronage and support of a faith-based organization.

Accordingly, urban "protection space" which has been discussed extensively around the UNHCR's policy of urban refugees, is very much defined by power structures and relationships, and the mode of citizenship as perceived at the local level of urban space. The lived "protection space" appeared to have its limitations and confinements. Some areas appeared as "no entry" zones for "top-down" protection mechanisms as the refugees' daily lives and settings are dependent on other sets of protection mechanisms.

However, the current discussion of functionalities of urban spaces in response to refugee influxes calls for a wider and deeper understanding of social and economic compositions and functions of these spaces, and then the translations of that into how those functions serve or obstruct the settlement/ absorption/ integration/ livelihoods of refugees.



# **Chapter 6** | **Political Setting: Actors, Networks and Self Organized Structures**





## **Introduction**

**G**iven the introduction to spaces where Syrians are accommodated, to their economic profiles and ways of reception and dispersion and to particularities of urban spaces which accommodate them, this chapter will provide an initial exploration of the frameworks of relationships and actors involved in the Syrian refugees' context on a wider city level. It will try to locate the local urban governance and networks in the areas studied in Chapter 5 in a broader picture of the humanitarian regime and other actors' networks which form the formal framework of refugees' governance. In addition, this chapter will investigate the social and political participation environment in Cairo and the way in which the resulting configuration of relationships is influencing overall humanitarian assistance and self-organized structures in the turbulent times Egypt is currently experiencing.

While editing the final draft of this paper, a policy shift was issued in Egypt towards Syrian refugees post to the power shift on July 3rd and has been declared as temporary. However, primary data collection has been conducted before the end of May and thus I refer to the change where necessary but have kept the state of the information as for its collection time.

### **6.1 The Egyptian political setting for the Syrians' support and activism,**

Egypt is perceived as coming second after Turkey in terms of political activism for the Syrian opposition activities, regardless of the numbers of refugees in it [i] (interviews and discussions: 2013 and this is again before July 3rd power shift). Its own current political unrest and the relative sociopolitical openness since the Egyptian revolution allow for spaces of activism which are happening on different layers; national, formal opposition, formal Syrian government, city-wide level and urban space levels (public information: 2012-2013). Given the general profile of the present Egyptian government with regards to the integration of refugees which has been discussed at length in Chapter 2, and rethinking it in the context of the Syrian refugees, it appears welcoming and hospitable yet lacking legal and institutional frameworks. The absence of national rights-based asylum policies makes the current policy towards the Syrians a spontaneous welcoming one rather than a long-run integrative one. Therefore, integration as a strand of the durable solutions for refugees is difficult to attain through the formal governance setting. The position of the Egyptian government is controversial with the

economic and political unrest and the duration of the Syrian crisis.

The Government of Egypt (GoE) issued a decree in September 2012 allowing Syrians access to basic health and education services. That has encouraged more Syrians to come although it has not been fully utilized due to many reasons: the perceived poor quality of these services, reported difficulties in the bureaucratic procedures and the generally overburdened public sector services themselves (UNHCR RRP June 2013; Gittleson 2013). It is not known what would happen when the crisis develops into a protracted one and livelihood concerns for refugees become more pressing.

The government's open door policy towards the Syrians remains however a vital aspect as it reduces efforts for legal protection by the humanitarian community and allows Egypt to take part in the regional crisis. Nonetheless, the recent power shift and tightening policy against the Syrians have huge implications on the crisis regional response in general and on the humanitarian community as legal protection has been brought to the fore (Michael and Rizk 2013).

## **6.2 Actors, Networks, and relationships,**

The Syrian refugees in Egypt have access to support through many channels. Egyptian governmental and civil society organizations, community-based and local, international and religiously-affiliated non-governmental organizations in addition to individual donors besides the host Egyptian community who are all, in a way or another, contributing to providing assistance. All of these actors have differing agendas and target groups, geographical areas and sectors (primary data: 2013-2013). In order to get a broad understanding of the different aspects in the Syrian refugees' context in Egypt, the actors involved and their different interactions and relationships, are illustrated in figure 28.

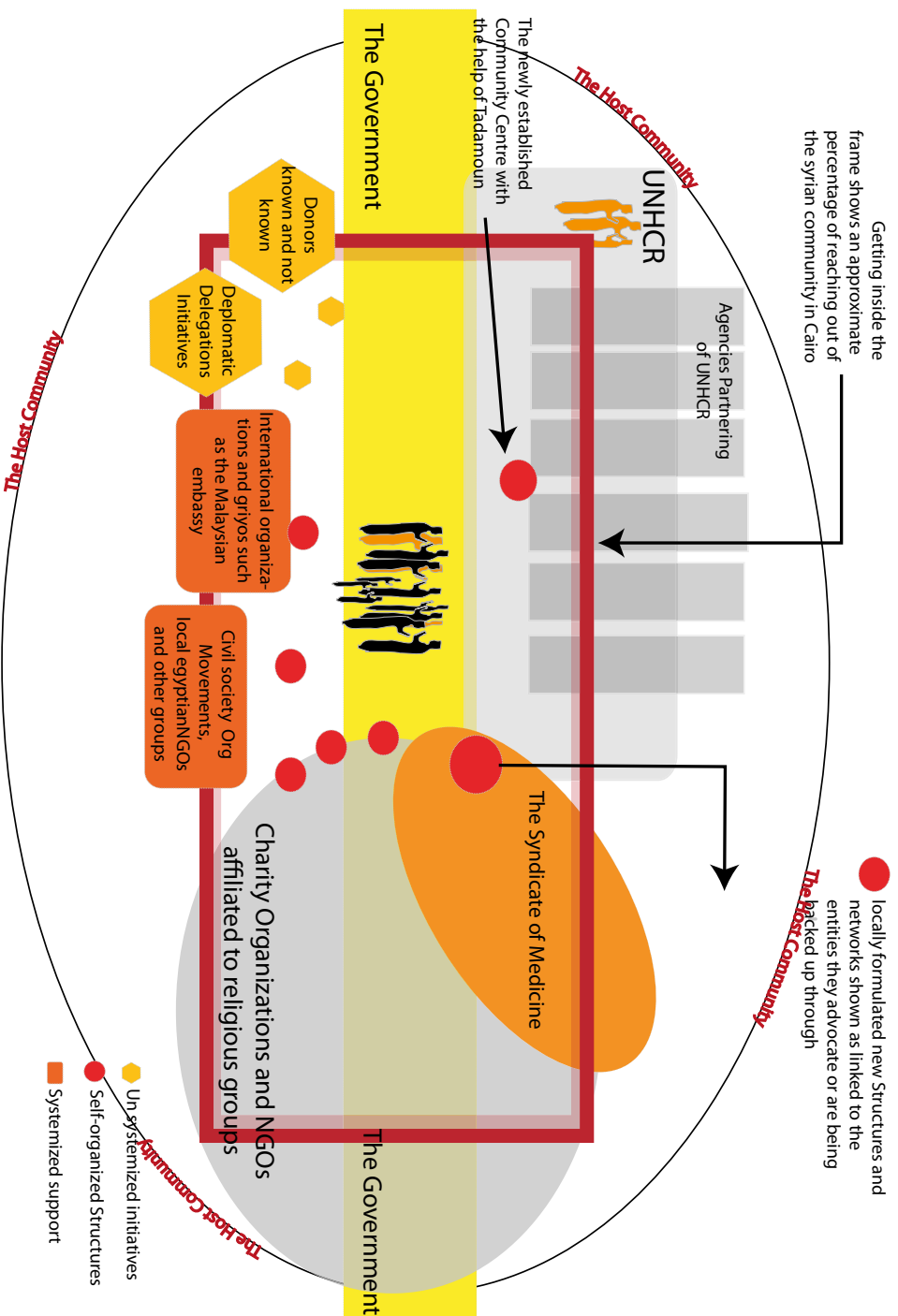


Figure 28. The loop of Actors and outreaching in the Syrian refugee community  
 Source: Developed by Author based on (Sejourne & Sims 2009 cited in Sims 2011 based on primary data

Figure 28 shows that in general, and beside the humanitarian community, faith-based organizations and entities are playing a very important role in supporting the Syrian refugees. The type of support is, in many cases, substantial; some of them provide housing, basic furnishings and periodic basic needs. Notwithstanding civil society is widely perceived as huge in Egypt, its presence is modest in comparison to others which put Syrians at risk of dependency on politicized aid (discussions: UNHCR meeting). At the beginning of the crisis, the roles of faith-based structures were even bigger (See appendix 7 for an earlier drawing of the same figure). The increasing numbers and the inability of faith-based structures to meet the increasing demands made Syrians seek more systemized support channels such as UNHCR.

### **6.2.1 The Syrians and the Humanitarian Regime**

The Syrians now form the largest registered asylum seekers' community in Egypt and have been included for the first time, in December 19th, 2012, in the Regional Response Plan (RRP) and are now part of RRP 5 and the upcoming plans. However, some of the Syrians who fled to Egypt are not registered as asylum seekers. Reasons behind not registering are various. Many of them are related to the uncertainty of their situation, their reluctance to construct an identity as a "refugee", their hopes of returning to Syria soon, the fear of jeopardizing the safety of their families who remain in Syria, the concern of being identified and their information being shared or leaked, or simply ignorance of the registration processes (ibid.). Moreover, better-off groups of refugees think that they do not need to register as they do not require the services offered. Those who come from areas that are more active in the Syrian uprising (such as displaced groups from Homs, Dar'a and Damascus country side) tend to register with the UNHCR as they enjoy the political meaning embodied in the status of refugee (Interviewee: Abu Nidal, 2013)

The recent dramatic increase of registrations and the ever increasing numbers of new arrivals meant that refugees already living in Egypt started to need the humanitarian community's support, or to trust it more. The ever increasing numbers of arrivals have posed a challenge to the humanitarian agencies in Egypt. UNHCR has expanded its operations by inviting more partners on board. Some 11 appealing agencies, 7 NGOs and 5 UN agencies have joined (interagency meeting May 2013). The provided services range from health, psycho-social support, educational grants and cash assistance for food and non- food items (ibid.). It has been reported by UNHCR that approximately 50% of registered Syrian families have been given financial assistance and that some 30.000 registered

individuals are expected to be among the most vulnerable facing protection risks and/or destitution by the end of June, 2013 (RRP, 2013). Security concerns which fall harsher on vulnerable groups (and especially refugees) are worrying to the UN agencies and its implementing and operational partners.

### **6.2.2 Self-Organized Structures**

Syrian organized structures as important mechanisms developed within the “community” to make support channels more reachable have vital roles in refugee communities and usually are indications of community formation processes (Minnick 2009). They appear in figure 28 associated with certain organizations or actors by which they are supported to operate. The general setting for establishing refugees’ community-based organizations (CBOs) or other entities is controversial and uncertain following the Egyptian revolution. The recent debate on the new NGO law reveals many concerns among professionals in this regard. The draft of the law seems to have many restrictions on the work of NGOs in Egypt let alone for refugees (discussion: Khallaf and Ahmad 2013). Yet, there has been some space for informal activism with the absence of the intelligence service’s surveillance which had in the past closed down and traced refugee entities (interviewee: IOM 2013). Many of the refugee CBOs and local structures are not formalized and are hindered by funding troubles and closure (ibid.). There is a strong connection between the political background of the various refugee groups, their space for activities and the Egyptian government’s position from their backgrounds. In the Syrian context, one civil society platform for Syrian youth had major difficulties in sustaining funds and had to partner with charity organizations to get funding by building on their connections to supportive power structures which were basically faith-based and ratified by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). Another Syrian organization was successful in making its work formal in Egypt through having good connections to MB members. One community centre has been established by UNHCR and its implementing partner (TADAMOON) and is operating now inside Sitta October.

These types of structures are sensitive to governance modes, to local area politics and to institutional capacity development (SC 2013). However, civil society activist groups [ii]revealed the fact that they have limited operating space with regards to their work and very poor support channels. The concept of charity still dominates the scene, and relief structures are the most prevalent, which is normal at the beginning of a crisis. However, there is a lot of confusion surrounding the situation of charity and civil society, and between development and charity, which needs to be clarified by institutional frameworks. The crisis is no longer

new and the sooner an organized and appropriate response to the refugee influx is decided, the better. It is also important to report that the effective presence of civil society and local Egyptian NGOs is still missing and that there is a critical need for such organized structures to make communication possible among different Cairo spheres where refugees are dispersed but this is a challenging task.

### **6.2.3 Relationships to the host community,**

The modes of relationships with the Egyptian communities vary and are based on personal experiences; many people reported good relationships and sympathetic feelings from Egyptians; some showed conservative attitudes and developed avoidance strategies while few reported being exploited or cheated. The attitudes were distinctively influenced by the type of urban space the two groups inhabit. On a different level, it is interesting to think of this relationship through its historical evolution. The two countries shared the same administration over many eras, especially during Muhammad Ali's reign (1805-1848) and they were united as a Republic (1958-1961). Nonetheless, the perceptions of each group towards the other are subject to direct interaction and mix in the current inflows. It is further influenced by the state of the Syrians as asylum seekers and the general political, social and economic unrest in both countries. There has been a recalibration of the modes of relationships of the Syrian groups (be they politicized or not) in the sets of relationships and structures within the Egyptian socio-political context. Both sides have polarized political views and structures and these modes are being reproduced within the Egyptian context and developing a complex configuration of relationships.

However, genuine interaction requires more than this. With the absence of shared social and political organizations among the two groups, and given the small number of civil society and formal Egyptian organizations taking care of refugees in a systemized way, the refugees' state of integration in Egypt remains uncertain. Religion has had a notable role in providing an egalitarian mechanism in which neither is perceived as a host nor a guest and local religious entities and structures have been very active in emergency response to refugee crisis (Landau 2012). They have been operating in parallel to designated organizations like UNHCR. However, integration needs more genuine types of relationships as charity and humanitarian assistance can create a hierarchy of superiority, and true integration is strongly linked to self-reliance (Sandercock 2000). Normally, the host culture tends to be superior and tends to prevail over migrants (ibid.). Syrians of course have their own way of preserving their culture and community relationships. This has started to show through the development of their own spaces,

setting up schools for Syrians only and many reported the preference to move into or closer to areas where more Syrians have settled. There has been a lot of discussion around cases of marriage between Egyptian men and young Syrian girls, which is a very sudden and possibly drastic type of integration. Evidence on this subject is not reliable- this will take more time to study.

It is also worth noting in the context of relations with the host community that some poor Egyptian groups, like the ones in Othman, felt resentful about the aid received by the Syrians only, when they themselves had the same needs and problems (SC 2013). With the recent change of public opinion towards the Syrians fueled by a hostile media, a lot of these sympathetic and empathetic attitudes have changed and might continue to cause real worries for the Syrians.

To end this section, it is important to note that the relationships within the Syrian refugee community and with other refugee communities in Cairo have been studied already, as listed in (appendix 5). The following section will introduce the presence of the urban administration and the previously mentioned actors' relationships.

### **6.3 Locating urban administration in the Actors' Map**

The researcher conducted interviews with the urban administrations in Sitta October, Omraneya District, New Cairo New Community Authority, Rehab Gated City and Giza Informal Areas Upgrading Unit in Boulaq district authority. The findings revealed the fact that the only urban administration which was aware of the management responsibilities which have been placed on them by the influx of such large numbers of refugees was the private "gated" city of Rehab. Here, they were even aware of the political polarizations, the increase in the value of real estate and numbers of refugees in their area and their orientations. Upon meeting with the UNHCR regional representative in Egypt, it was found that their own relationship to the urban administrations was not existent, although the UNHCR (2009) policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas states the importance of building such relationships in order to expand "protection space" (see article 31)[iii]. Conversely, the direct formal entity which is more connected to on- the- ground realities and to everyday life in the urban spaces of the vast city of Cairo was not institutionally involved or even aware of the management responsibilities which would overload their resources and entail providing more or different services in the urban areas they are responsible for. This is in spite of the fact that, as discussed in Chapter 4, a refugee presence could form a stimulant to urban development and could bring revenues that compensate for some

entities' unfeasible investments such as NUCA. Conversely, the complex network of relationships between the humanitarian community and development actors (such as the UN HABITAT) has not yet resulted in cooperating with the urban administration, although they form integral partners of such organizations.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

The study of the different networks that have been established among refugee communities highlights the continued need to consider how intersecting geopolitical city spheres, governance and actors impact on refugee settings, services and social structures (Danielson 2012). There has been a complex weaving and growth of relations in the Syrian refugee context, and governance of the Syrian refugee community has developed in the form of a complex configuration of actors, interests and values interacting and reproducing different sets of relationships within the Egyptian political settings. These relationships seem supportive for some groups and not encouraging for others, and mostly devised by religious affiliations and faith-based charity structures in the host community. The humanitarian organizations' growing engagement and responsibilities have started to create a strong expectation that support for the refugees will be more systemized and sustainable. Yet not all Syrians in Egypt want to be registered asylum seekers for reasons mentioned earlier. Integration of Syrians into the Egyptian community is not yet well enough established for studying and critique; however, a wide spectrum of levels of "initial integration" have been reported which would provide an initial premise when studying this aspect later.

The Egyptian settings, especially with the structures of governance in the post revolution era, are undergoing constant transformations which are transmitted to the way in which refugees' aid, livelihoods and activism are happening. This has been reflected in the allowance of "desirable" segments of them, and the direct or indirect hindering of the "unwanted". As we have seen, different groups, or segments of the community are treated differently. However, these aspects are also changing with the dynamic nature of transformation in the country and have shown and will continue to show shifts in public attitudes, national policies and roles and range of actors working in the refugee context following the government shift on July 3rd and the consequences on the security situation and reconciliation efforts in Egypt.



[i]

Types of activism of the Syrians in Egypt:

-Some politically active Syrians who want to promote their political parties come to Egypt in order to establish allies with corresponding Egyptian parties and to gain support from some of the Syrian refugee groups and activists who reside in Egypt,

-Some Syrian formal opposition groups meet and organize gatherings in Egypt

-Many conferences and workshops are held for the Syrians and Egyptians discussing issues like Education, local forces in transition- these are usually dependent on specific allied political groups between both countries,

-Groups who are connected to the armed rebels inside Syria are tightly engaged in supporting specific groups in Egypt and have flows of some fighters or activists who come via Turkey to Egypt, sometimes for medical care and recovery and other reasons,

-There is still some “formal Syrian government” activism yet not very obvious. However, some leftist and nationalist Egyptian parties are publicly supporting the Syrian regime and have also connections inside Syria.

[ii]

Civil society here is defined by the interviewee and not for its true nature and it is defined as a platform for enabling youth from different walks of life through advocacy and development activities.

[iii]

“In urban contexts, municipal authorities and mayors have a particularly important role to play in the objective of expanding protection space, and UNHCR will consequently place particular emphasis on its relationship with these actors. At the same time, and in pursuit of the same objective, the Office will work closely with the national authorities, the police and judiciary, the private sector, NGOs, legal networks, other civil society institutions and development agencies.” (UNHCR 2009: 6)



## **Chapter 7**



### **Conclusions, Recommendations and Future Outlook**



## **Introduction**

**T**his chapter presents a recapitulation of the field research findings as part of the conclusion to this paper, and some recommendations on the approach to dealing with refugees in Cairo areas on both policy and activity levels. It will further investigate a few scenarios for the future of the city as a place of refuge. The scenarios will make a general outlook of the cityscape initially considering different migrant and refugee communities and then depict two scenarios specific to Syrian refugees (the scenarios are put in appendix 6). Towards the end, this chapter will bring general concluding ideas together summing up the main themes and findings that have been discussed throughout the paper.

### **7.1 Summary on Key Findings: Conclusions on Field work**

Cairo has created multi-choice avenues for refugees within its diverse urban spaces. It has catered for some people's prospects and imaginations and offered chances to provide shelter and channels of livelihoods and support. At the same time, it has been exhausting for a larger population to comprehend and navigate its divided spheres and complexity. Its extreme economic and class-based polarized urban representations have positioned the newcomers in corresponding types of polarized spaces and marginalized many of them, overloading their vulnerabilities and psycho-social state. The Syrians are also settling into socio-economic and political functions within the city that influence if not control their aid and livelihood options. The national legislative system for refugees' integration and its restrictive formal and tenuous informal sectors put refugees into situations where humanitarian systems play central roles to accommodate their needs along with informal governance and the conviviality of the local Egyptian community.

Therefore, within this national framework, the thinking of the factors which pull refugees into specific areas or repel them contributes to the core of the discourse on understanding the range of urban responses to refugee influxes, which will assist in managing those influxes and projecting potential future trends. Interrogating these factors calls for understanding and empathizing with the story of the refugees from arrival to dispersal and indeed beyond that. The Syrian refugees' backgrounds and socio-economic and political profiles have influenced the search of sanctuary, and targeted places of settlement and moves within the city. Refugees sought to be hidden and anonymous in some areas, and in others, traced charity support, a conceptualized secure urban experience and to

congregate where other Syrians have already established networks. Rent values played another important role and consequently the Syrians have had a direct impact on the rental market with their concentration in certain areas of the city. The city offers chances of dignified lives for the economically better-off refugees and marginalizes the poor and conditions them to sets of manipulative relationships that respond to their needs. Political participation in the ongoing events in both places of origin and in the target city has been found to be a significant weighting influence. Urban modes of governance steer and change the direction of refugees' navigation through the city as their prospects for aid and political participation are affected by current events and cause further moves within the city's structures.

With a Syrian refugee "community" that has been settled for more than a year at the time of writing, a "refugee" cityscape has started to emerge, driven by direct "use" and "change of use" of some urban spaces and their spatial appropriation with the high concentrations of Syrians residing in particular areas, namely Sitta October satellite city. The making of a "community"; more precisely "geographically close networks and groupings" process as genuine communities need more time, has also developed a sense of "semi-autonomous" Syrian pockets, which embody a collective identity and form a direct medium of politics in the way they translate power relationships, political orientation and positions with regards to ongoing events in both countries. Refugees formed a stimulant for the long awaited urban development of satellite cities in Cairo through socio-economic and cultural activities which have been brought to these areas.

On a city-wide scale, and focusing on specific urban settings where Syrian communities are accommodated, the protection environment of refugees has been found to be varied. It revealed the fact that refugees negotiate complex and sometimes conflicting positions in each space. For example, protection mechanisms have been set and controlled by power brokers and by local forms of political and social organizations in the informal settlement of Omraneya. Conversely, they were directed by a "civic extortion" mechanism: "if you pay and you behave well, you are entitled to privatized protection" in Rehab gated city and by a "Patronage type" of faith-based governance in the remote housing project. Refugees have to position themselves in local and trans-local formal and informal power relationships and they have indeed been attracted by proximities to these webs or have been repelled by them. The "protection space" appears to have evolved in between the geopolitical spheres of the city and has been experienced differently from what is conceived or perceived by the UNHCR policy on urban

refugees. Refugees' protection spaces are beyond mere physical coverage of abstract entitlements and categorizations discussed in chapter 2 have their real time order which influences aid, livelihood and security concerns. The spaces of the city have varying functions for their residents and still more marked variations for the refugees, where social and political institutions and perceptions of how the system works make lives within these areas very different for the two groups.

Given the post- Arab spring transitional power structures and its reproduced modes of governance within the framework of Egypt and Cairo, Syrian refugees' governance (formal and informal) is interwoven: the web of relationships and roles that have been established among refugees and within the larger national, transnational and international scales are intersected and assorted. They further carry their own polarizations and are being recalibrated within parallel polarized systems. Many local, city and country- wide actors have been engaged and their roles, values and positions are significantly influenced by the transitional era and the power shifts which are taking place. Both the deposed government (Morsi's administration) and local communities showed both sympathetic support and hospitality. Humanitarian responses have been active and Syrians in Egypt are formally part of the Regional Crisis Response Plan which brought more actors on board and developed several aid schemes for the community. These are still not sufficient to cater for all the needs of the large numbers of refugees and many Syrians are still reluctant to register with the UNHCR and so miss out on these schemes. Some Syrians have started establishing their own relief and community development self-organized entities as part of their "community"- making processes which, according to its political orientation and networking, receive support on one side, and encounter a restrictive political setting on the other.

## **7.2 Recommendations,**

Before starting to list some of the recommendations which are based on field work and the review of policy papers and case studies, it is important to note that I had occasion to question my position in making recommendations, as I thought of myself as both an urban planner and someone who is concerned with the whole situation through my academic input and personal interest. The following points summarize some of the recommendations:

### **7.2.1 Policy Areas:**

#### **7.2.1.1 More Inclusive and Integrative Approaches towards Urban Refugees,**

•The humanitarian community, international NGOs and local civil society and other relief and development actors will need to build more effective and diverse partnerships and develop community-based approaches (WDR 2012). These approaches could develop around promoting inclusion rather than the conventional roles in dealing with refugees by managing exclusion in camps (Haysom 2013). They imply involving host communities and their institutions and including them in the emergency response and development plans for refugees. Many of the host communities are needy, poor and have similar profiles to the refugees and assisting them will promote acceptance among both groups. Nevertheless, it is a challenging task- it entails institutional reform, from the UNHCR, the host government, line ministries, municipal authorities, other NGOs and local initiatives. Combining emergency response with development initiatives calls for bringing in different mandates, policies and tools of implementation. Refugee-based and area-based approaches require tapping into multi-disciplinary experiences of urban, development, refugee and humanitarian narratives. It is noteworthy that UNHCR had a useful previous experience in Cairo in Arba'a Nus informal settlement where a large number of Sudanese refugees reside and where host Egyptian communities were serviced as well as the Sudanese (Grab-ska 2006). However, it has not applied this lesson to its response to the influx of Syrian refugees.

#### **7.2.1.2 Protection Mechanisms,**

•Develop policy frameworks which set more specific and area-sensitive community-based protection mechanisms developed by involving both refugees and host communities, and ensure that refugees will have active roles in their protection. This will be guided by an elaborated understanding of the complex factors and informal governance influence on these mechanisms. Furthermore, support



civil society actors in their rights-based approaches and involve local authorities in the provision and development of protection mechanisms.

### **7.2.1.3 Managing unpredictability/preparedness plans**

- Working in shaky and unpredictable situations will entail elaborate planning skills and a multi-disciplinary approach towards thinking of future scenarios and emergency preparedness plans. It will further require ongoing consultations and effective communication with the national political, social and economic institutions and experienced individuals and to reflect their thinking in creating alternative planning options.

### **7.2.1.4 Effective role and partnerships with urban Administrative Offices**

Refugees can be stimulants and catalysts for urban development in under-utilized areas such as new towns in Cairo's satellite cities- therefore, managing their spaces should be effectively done by NUCA. The revenues that are being created from the economic activities and the presence of refugees are valuable as these areas and their administrative offices have been constrained by low development and negative profitability.

- In informal settlements, which are other areas of refugee concentrations, urban administrations are overburdened and yet need constructive support. Collaboration with Informal areas funds, Informal Areas Upgrading Projects and other actors is key to outreaching and providing services and support to refugees.

- It is important also, when planning for refugees in urban areas, to think of their movement within the city and to try to manage that. Specific area-development plans could encourage further concentrations and form pull factors for refugees. This in turn might make working with refugees easier for the UNHCR and other actors.

- Utilize available urban expertise in setting different types of plans; emergency preparedness, response, outreaching, psycho-social support and other plans as a lot of the know-how and the information which is already gathered within urban administration is not being utilized and the humanitarian sector often lacks this type of expertise.

- Humanitarian agencies and other international and local NGOs working with refugees in urban areas need to have urban units within their systems and to set urban strategies, establish GIS systems and work effectively and closely with experienced urban planning and development experts from within their systems

### **. 7.2.2 Managing real-estate markets and avoiding arbitrary eviction and disputes**

Legal assistance for housing issues is important in urban refugee contexts (WDR 2012). Real estate intermediary organizations have been founded in many urban centers through municipal and civil society efforts to alleviate the negative effects of the rise of real estate values on poorer residents . It develops its mediation role to combat gentrification and market eviction, and to also support the search for suitable options through data bases and other resources. Agencies working with the refugees need to learn from the frameworks of such organizations and to develop their structures to alleviate a lot of the problems in the search for shelter and the subsequent rise in the rental market for refugees.

More recommendations on outreaching, gender issues, livelihoods and local structures are provided in Appendix 6.

### **7.3 Future Scenarios**

It is difficult to predict what the future might hold for Syrian refugees in Cairo, especially in light of the current political and social turbulence. Major upheavals in dynamic urban environments affect refugees as well as residents, and, given the fragmentation of Cairo's urban cityscape, in many cases will have a more drastic impact on refugees than on local Egyptians. Yet, there are some salient features emerging in the particular areas where significant numbers of refugees have settled: some areas seem to be developing into urban estuaries of a more cosmopolitan nature combining refugees and previous almost middle class migrant groups, such as Heliopolis with more Christians (Shami ,coming from Greater Syria Region), Greeks, Armenians, Italians, etc...), and Rehab with a mix of residents. Other areas seem to be sliding into scenarios of segregation, xenophobia and future upheavals, while a few seem to have showed refugee cityscapes with more concentrations of Syrians such as Sitta October.

The variety of future possibilities raises many questions about the role, particular characteristics and timing of the arrival of thousands of Syrian refugees in Cairo and the change of policy directions towards the Syrians. The recent policy reversal on July 8th 2013 requiring entry visas and security clearance for Syrians has implications for the influxes and on the future situation of the Syrians in Egypt. This is accompanied by a change in public opinions and xenophobic attitudes against the Syrians that will cause further stresses and shocks of rejection, public harassment and street and other types of violence besides the general insecurity concerns. Syrian refugees will further be affected through the budget cuts or reduction of faith- based aid channels as the Islamists' governance has been weakened. The whole picture is unclear and the coming period might carry more hardships and predicaments for the Syrians in their refugee life in Egypt and Cairo. To provide an educated guess, two scenarios from a Syrian refugee perspective considering policy change in one and an enduring refugee situation in the other are made in Appendix 6 with further questions on the city's future as a place of refuge.

#### **7.4 Conclusion,**

The cityscape of Cairo has been worked and reworked by influxes of voluntary and involuntary migrants from within the country and from other parts of the world. Many of these groups settle in Cairo, some consider it as a transitory station and maintain feelings of temporariness, and others keep a foot in the city and another elsewhere. Cairo has its own intra-city displacement dilemma and many of its poor residents are subject to ongoing relocation. Accordingly, the cityscape is contested and complex and it fosters intricate feelings of attachments and connections. Conversely, some spaces within Cairo seem to be separate, fragmented and more connected to extra-territorial spaces than to ones within the city. In that regard, the city's histories in receiving and hosting refugees and migrants and the functions of its institutions matter. Examining spaces of refugees within Cairo entails a deep understanding of its socio-economic and political structures and of the development and composition of its urban spaces, and the complexities of its power relations in tumultuous times. Reflecting on the theoretical frameworks of such spaces which were set forward in chapter 2 have been realized through initial explorations of the compositions and structures discussed through chapters 4 and 5 in multi-disciplinary manner , yet it requires further in-depth examination. In addition, the influence of the transformations it is undergoing on this specific group of city-dwellers must be considered; the refugees, whose city-zen-ship is questioned and whose position is vulnerable and uncertain.

For the Syrian refugees, who have their previous social, political and economic ties with Egypt, examining the complex relationships between them and city's urban spaces and actors entails authentic involvement with the refugees and with the organization of the city. The perceptions of the relationships between Syrians and Egyptians which are based on a long history of migration, trade and historic connections between the two countries are reproduced within a new framework-that of the plight of the Syrian displacement, resulting in direct contact with a different aspect of Syrians as refugees and against a backdrop of ongoing political and social unrest in both countries.

Therefore, the examination of spaces of refuge within the city's framework entails correlating multitudes of layers. Spaces of refuge are products of physical structures and dynamic relationships, flows, sensations and embody convoluted meanings and aspirations. They are further incited by the formal and informal political, economic, social and psychological attitudes of the organization of city spaces. They are charged with extra prospects to accommodate refugees' secu-

rity and psycho-social needs, which in many cases, they do not fulfill and cause continuous intra-city movement. Nevertheless, it is simplistic and extraneous to draw conclusions that cover city-wide spaces in a generalized way. A city like Cairo will not veer towards extreme scenarios between xenophobia and cosmopolitanism/ transitory and final destination with its contested, polarized and fragmented nature. It can however develop multiple corresponding scenarios that deal with its spaces and their sovereignties separately. Although the total number of refugees forms a small percentage of the population in a mega city like Cairo, their concentrations in specific urban areas makes a significant difference. Some spaces might have heightened stress levels where poor Syrians compete with poor local residents for scarce resources and meager services; here they are more exposed to violence and exploitation while in contrast other spaces might form Petri-dishes of cohabitation with diverse migrant communities and contested identities.

At heart, this research has attempted to examine the conjunctions of humanitarian concerns within urban frameworks through connecting urban expertise to refugee literature in an empirical-led way. It has undoubtedly been a demanding task, especially at times of huge economic and political transformations and with a plethora of literature on Cairo's urbanization modes, forced displacement, marginalized spaces, migrant communities, refugees' histories and humanitarian aspects. The living nature of the research and the constantly changing situations of the Syrian refugees and of Egypt has added limitations to the conduction of field and desktop analyses. Whereas the research is stirring in nature as it unravels undiscovered realities and exposes them for the first time, it also calls for a lot of moral and humanitarian attention. The gaps in earlier studies which have looked at particularities of Urban vs. Refugees and at Syrian refugees caused this research to expand in scope in order to come up with initial discoveries and then focus accordingly.

The picture of the future of Syrian refugees in Cairo is uncertain with the recent and ongoing instability and the change in public perceptions and the government's positions. Egypt, through its policy shift, is slowing down the flows of Syrians to it, and the Syrians in turn are trapped in double turmoil in Egypt- they are escaping a raging conflict and coming to a state of uncertainty in Egypt. Accordingly, agencies and actors working on the context in general and on the Syrian refugees in particular will have a wider role to play in the coming period and the Syrians themselves as well as other refugee communities will have to pro-actively develop their self-organized mechanisms to cope with all these predicaments..

Cities like Cairo benefit enormously from contributions of immigrants, migrants and refugees, and likewise, the lives of these incomers have also been enriched by the experience, even if not always positive, of life in the mega-metropolis. Although the current turmoil in Egypt and the civil conflict in Syria make forecasts of the future difficult, the presence of hundreds of thousands of Syrians in Cairo at this point of history could have profound implications for the political, economic and social relationships and ties between the two countries in the next decade.

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## **Photos of Chapters Openers**

Moises Saman 2013. Nowhere People: The Refugees of Syria by Moises Sama Available at: <http://lightbox.time.com/2013/07/02/nowhere-people-the-refugees-of-syria-by-moises-saman/#ixzz2bBDkDXWC>

Some photos in the thesis are taken by Mohammad Al Omar and referred to as Al Omar

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## **UN Agencies and Other International Organization**

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UNHCR definition on Protection (2013). Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646cc8.html> [Accessed May 23rd, 2013]

### **Primary Data Resources:**

Primary Data, Public Information: refers to different multiple resources

Interviewee Mr. Said, Mammoun: community leader in U'bur 3/2/2013

Interviewee Mr. Abu Ammar: community leader in Sitta October 5/5/2013

Interviewee Mr. Diab, Mohamed: community leader in Sitta October 5/5/2013

Interviewee Mr. Dayri, Mohammad: UNHCR representative 5/6/2013

Interviewee Ms. Emad, Gehad: IOM representative 12/4/2013

Interviewee Mr. Hamdan, Yacoub: AMERA

Interviewee Mr. Rifaat Mohammad: (A Historian on Armenian Refugees in Egypt)

Interviewee Mr. City Mayor of Rehab 1/4/2013

Interviewee Mrs. Al Akhras, Manal; Sitta October Urban Administration 8/6/2013

Interviewee Mr. Abdul Aziz, Mohammad in the city administration of Rehab 1/4/2013

Interviewee Mr. Ahmad (real estate agent in Masaken Othman) 24/5/2013

Interviewee Mrs. Bakr, Laila ( head of statistics department) in Omraneya District

Interviewee Mr. Yousef , Mohammad (Head of GIS department in Giza Informal Areas Upgrading Unit) 9/5/2013

Discussion with Ahmad, Eman and Khallaf, Shaden, May 2013

Interviewee Mr. Jalil: Jam3iya Shar3ia (Sitta October)

UNHCR interagency meeting (May 2013)

UNHCR interagency meeting (June 2013)

UNHCR debriefing meeting with Mr. Panos Moutmtzis

Misselwitz Philipp (2013). Feedback on the written material





## Appendices



## **Appendix 1: A chronology of Refugees in Egypt since the turn of the 20th century with their places of residence in Cairo,**

- The Armenians came to Cairo in successive fluctuations, yet those of them who were fleeing persecution of the Ottoman empire started coming since 1894 and in bigger numbers after Armenian genocide in 1914, basically by sea to Alexandria and then to camps in (Interviewee: Rifaat 2010) . They moved in between different areas as had to settle and develop their strategies for livelihoods, many migrated as part of a strategy for durable solutions and others integrated. Today, as estimate of 2000 Armenians live in Heliopolis and some of the new towns where other migrant communities reside (Interviewee: Rifat, May 2013) (Heliopolis was at the time a (new town) were new comers in 1914 lived in and then they pulled core areas' Armenians. They have set their own organizations and they cooperate closely with other communities such as the Christians from Al Sham region, Italians, Greek and so on.

- Palestinians fluctuated to Cairo post to the 1948 and 1976 wars and in between. They formed the largest refugee community in Egypt until the recently arriving Syrians have outnumbered them. Their movements and allocations in Cairo shows that they were confined into camps in Abbasiya and they moved later to settle in different neighbourhoods. Today, most of them live in Heliopolis, Dokki and Nasr City for better off groups and in Shubra, Abbasiya and Ain Shams for lower economic standards (Waleed 2010).

- The waves of the Sudanese refugees to Egypt have been one of the continuous ones till now. Between 1955 and 1972, post to the civil war, the first waves started followed by larger numbers in 1990-1992 and till today as Nuba mountains Sudanese are allowed to seek asylum. Their places of residence are Hadayek al maadi and Abbasiya (Darfur and southern Soudan, Northern Sudanese live in Abdeen and Sitta October, Ain Shams from different origins in Sudan, Ard el Liwa and Giza and Faisal, who come from various Sudanese compositions) (Interviewee: Hamdan 2013; Zohry 2003)

- Somalis (as in the status of asylum seekers they started to come to Egypt after the 1991 civil war and there were different compositions of migrant Somalis in Cairo before that. Today, they live mostly in three districts; Ard el Liwa and Nasr City and Ezbet el Nakhl in Ain Shams (ibid.).

- Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees live in Ard el liwa, maadi al zamarat al kwaitaya , muhandisine, Arab el Maadi and Zeitoun (ibid.)

- Iraqis came to Cairo in many influxes and basically after milestones of 2003 and

2006 and they reside in the following areas; Sitta October, Maadi, Nasr City and Rehab (Minnick 2009)

## **Appendix 2: Main Variables and themes of field research**

### **2.1 List of indicators for the Questionnaires and main themes for Semi-structured interviews**

- a) Journeys and Reception,
  - a.1 place of origin in Syria
  - a.2 Time of arrival in Cairo (Egypt)
  - a.3 Length of stay in the area
  - a.4 Previous journeys reported (from leaving Syria to arriving in Cairo)
  - a.5 Reasons behind the selection of this area,
    - a.5.1 Having social networks, relatives, same city residents, business connections, work opportunities, urban characteristics, rent-free housing, other,
- b) Respondents' previous Urban Experience,
  - b.1 Previously experienced urban life where? Type of housing/neighborhood they lived in
  - b.2 Difference to current experience from the respondent's point of view,
  - b.3 Appropriation, adaptation strategies to new urban lives.
- c) Perceptions of the area of residence,
  - c.1 What things they like in here,
  - c.2 What things they do not like,
  - c.3 Do they think of moving? To where? And why?
- d) Current Urban experience,
  - d.1 Real estate values (we can report that by asking respondents, real estate agents and other Egyptians living in the same area for triangulation purposes)
  - d.2 BUS situation (Transportation, Water connection, Sanitation, waste disposal, schools and other facilities) which will also lead to a conclusion on
  - d.3 Use of public space (streets, parks, balconies, malls, Specific Syrian activities/nodes)
  - d.4 The presence of a community node in which Syrians gather regularly
  - d.5 Security concerns (general, for children, for women and young girls, other)
  - d.6 Relationships to neighbors particularly from host community,
- e) Perceived and Lived Protection,
  - e.1 How do they feel secure and safe (through which specific mechanisms)

e.2 What would happen in case they are obliged to move out? What secures their settlement in the area they are residing in now?

e.3 Any comments, perceptions on what could UNHCR provide them?

Relationships to NGOs, Charity Based, Influential individuals, (power structures in the area), However, this is to be investigated through mapping actors and through the interviews.

## **2.2 Main themes for semi-structured Interviews with refugee-specific organizations:**

### **2.2.1 AMERA and IOM and PSTIC,**

- Refugees' settings (where do they live (in general with a brief history on their presence) and how they feel about having the Syrians)
- The Egyptian setting in general for refugees and how they find the differences among different neighborhoods (this is a generic question, yet it means the way the host community in Egypt is dealing with different refugees as their attitudes to the Syrians are much more supportive than to African refugees or even to Iraqis (this has been reported repeatedly))
- Self-reliance and durable solutions in Egypt from the point of view of the interviewee,
- Scope and difference in between different urban areas and in between refugee communities (in brief)
- The work with urban refugees post to the Egyptian revolution and the subsequent uprisings: establishments of CBOs and refugees' feelings of security and integration? Any change in the attitudes, support ?
- Political activism of refugee communities post to the Egyptian revolution and the subsequent uprisings (briefly just monitoring changes if happened)

### **2.2.2 With UNHCR,**

General policy questions,

- Policies which are specific to urban areas,
- Outreaching and communication strategies in urban environments,
- Capacity to support and which are targeted population (Libyans, Iraqis, Sudanese, Somalis, .....)
- Strategies to support community centers and to build partnerships with local entities from refugee communities,
- The specific (Concerns, strategies) to cope with increasing numbers

The Syrian Refugee Population,

- Information on the flows, through which routes and most frequently used

ones,

- Reception points (which are the main ones for them and any policies or strategies to support in those areas)
- Cities of origin in Syria and pull factors they found about,
- Their relationships to the Egyptian government, urban governance in each neighborhood (specifically urban administration) and faith-based and other parallel systems
- Economic conditions and their plans for durable solutions and self reliance strategies,
- The relationship to Syrian emerging structures,
- Plans to encourage Syrians moving to specific areas of concentration

**Relationships to Other refugee population and to host communities,**

- Where are the main places in which other refugee population concentrates?
- Any strategies or policies to integration (among refugee population and with the host community)

**Post Revolution Era,**

- What are the main challenges/issues that are posed on the international regime working with refugees' protection post to the Egyptian revolution?
- What are the most important changes considered with the turbulences Egypt is undergoing nowadays?

**2.2.3 General Notes for the Interviews,**

- Knowledge on real estate values, problems with management of the urban environment, if the interviewee knows about local structures, developed economic activities and so on,
- Does he happen to know about a trend of people moving from one area to another? And why?
- What types of establishments, entities, and networks have been developed by people and how is that linked to Egyptian structures?
- Use of urban form to facilitate reception, communication, settlement and social life (observations and discussions)

- When interviewing any actor who is connected to service provision, city management or local structures, we need to ask basically the following main questions:
  - Geographical coverage,
  - Outreaching strategies and ways of connecting to community members,
  - Targeted population,
  - Provided services or activities,
  - Partners, donors, scope, future plans,
- In Rehab we need to conduct questionnaires in malls, spaces, parks, schools and see the public use of the gated community.
- Targeted respondents should range from residents of villas to apartment buildings,
- For all neighborhoods: Observe places with extra security settings (iron balustrades or extra blockage of openings)
- For informal areas: look at interaction in the building level, with the neighbours, more attention should be paid to use of streets and public spaces and to security concerns. How the crowdedness, image and less secure nature (only as an image) is influencing concepts of settling in and accommodating one's self to that.
- Connections to general public participation especially with political issues,

#### 2.2.4. With Urban Administration and Urban Management levels

- Look at the issues related to how much parallel systems are influencing the process of the delivery of services and to livelihood aspects.
- What parallel systems can be drawn and thought about from this general introduction to their situation,
- Influence on the urban management of the space they inhabit
- The catering of the urban services for such demands,
- The revenues of having such numbers of refugees with their economic activities,



## 2.3 Questionnaire in Arabic,

الاستبيان للاجئين السوريين في أماكن سكنهم في القاهرة الكبرى

### 1. الرحلة والوصول،

ما هي مدينة الأصل في سورية


وقت الوصول إلى القاهرة (ومصر)

مدة الإقامة في السكن الحالي،

الرحلات التي قاموا بها منذ خروجهم من سورية وحتى وصولهم إلى مصر

--

هل المستجوب مستأجر ، مالك أم مقيم بصفة مؤقتة عن طريق أحد

مالك

مستأجر

مؤجر بشكل مشترك مع أسرة أخرى

مؤجر والدفع مشترك أو مغطى من قبل جمعية

معطى هبة لفترة

--

--

أخرى.....

--

ما هو الإيجار الشهري المدفوع

--

هل زاد الإيجار خلال الفترة الماضية

--

التي زاد الإيجار خلالها

--

كم مقدار الزيادة

### 1. أسباب اختيار المنطقة

وجود علاقات عائلية في المنطقة

وجود معارف من نفس المدينة


علاقات عمل

فرص عمل


خصائص عمرانية (في الحي) معينة سعوا إليها

ما هي؟ حدد بالتفاصيل؟

أخرى: حدد


## 2. التجربة العمرانية السابقة للمستجوب

أين كانوا يعيشون وما نمط الحي والسكن الذي كانوا يقطنون به؟

--

ما الاختلاف المباشر المسجل عن التجربة الحالية؟

--

استراتيجيات التأقلم والمواءمة للحياة العمرانية الجديدة؟

سيعتمد هذا السؤال كثيراً على الملاحظة وكذلك على بعض الإجابات الجاهزة التي ستعطى للمستجوب..

الاستقبال في منطقة الاستقرار: كيفية الوصول للمرة الأولى والاستقبال: عن أي طريق؟

--

ما هي الأشياء التي يحبونها في منطقة السكن الجديدة؟

ما هي الأشياء التي لا يحبونها فيها؟

هل يفكرون بالانتقال؟

--

نعم

--

لا

إلى أين؟ لماذا؟

--

## التجربة العمرانية الحالية؟

وضع الخدمات العمرانية الأساسية

المواصلات

المياه،

الصرف الصحي،

المخلفات الصلبة

المدارس

أخرى

استخدام الفراغات العمرانية: هل يجلسون خارج المنزل، أين؟

هل يلعب الأطفال خارج المنزل؟

استخدام:

الشوارع

الحدائق

الأسواق

هل هناك مناطق معينة لتجمع السوريين في حديقة أو مكان عام،

وفي أي وقت يجتمعون فيها بشكل أكبر؟

العلاقة بالجيران

طرق الحماية والشعور بالأمان: عن أي طريق وكيف؟

الجمعيات التي تهتم بالمستجوب وفي أي مجال:

## **Appendix 3: More on Findings,**

### **3.1 Previous/Current Urban Experience**

The difference between the previous and current urban experiences of the interviewed refugees has been reported on the level of the housing form more than the general urban life, services and city form. Although, the mentioned repeatedly that the area in Masaken Othman is more spacious.

#### **3.1.1 Maskaken Othman**

**Current Urban Experience:** An exclusionary housing project around 40 k.m. from Cairo's downtown and some 5 k.m from the nearby satellite city of Sitta October.

**Earlier Urban Experience** Sub-urban to inner city areas (few lived in areas referred to as informal settlements) yet they are concrete detached homes or in flats in buildings. They refer to their earlier homes (as Arab houses), though they are not typical Arab houses. But this in general is a reference to their independence and detachment.

#### **3.1.2 Rehab**

**Current Urban Experience** A gated city with its own amenities and public services located some 20 K.M. from downtown Cairo.

**Earlier Urban Experience** All interviewees were from Damascus and Aleppo and they came from expensive better off districts such as (MazzeH AutoStrad, Rawda, Sha3lan and Abbaseien in Damascus and from Fourkan, Shahbaa', Masaken Zahraa and Sabil in Aleppo).

#### **3.1.3 Omraneya**

**Current Urban Experience** An informal settlement on agriculture land with apartment building in densely populated areas. The area of residence is not homogeneous and thus quality of living and of direct outdoor facilities is different.

**Earlier Urban Experience** They mostly (84%) were from sub-urban and peri-urban areas of Aleppo and Homs (Ashrafeyeh in Aleppo, Dair B3alba and Khaldi-yeh in Homs). The styles of their homes in Syria were self-built houses or few-storey apartment buildings which are different to the ones they accommodate

#### **Appendix 4: A question to consider: Does Masaken Othman exclusionary housing project function as a camp?**

Masaken Othman, according to the framework set by Saunders (2011), plays the role of both transitional and established cities. Despite the fact that the Syrian refugees live in it together with displaced Egyptians, it has some of the syndromes of a refugee camp. It has a corresponding city, so it looks like a suburb, it is contiguous with the city. There is no rigid boundary or other characteristics of refugee camps. The traditional way of thinking about camps in the refugee context is as a series of tents erected near the border between two countries as an extra-territorial space (Al Sayyad and Roy 2006). Landau (2012) discusses such refugee settlement in urban environments as distinctive from camps as: “They rely on local markets and social services. In doing so, they interact with local populations to a degree not necessarily seen among camp-based refugees” (Landau 2009: ). He further recommends looking more into relationships between hosts who are themselves new migrants, and in our case displaced groups, with refugees rather than comparing these spaces to camps. Camps could become parts of urban areas and further urban and political centers for decision as in the case of the Palestinian refugee camps in the Middle East (Dorai 2010). In some specific cases, the categorization depends upon the institution in charge of the refugees (ibid.). The single most important aspect in the definition of the camp is the “form of citizenship” in it (Al Sayyad and Roy 2006). The Syrian displaced in this space show doubled feelings of temporariness; one as for being in Egypt and the other for being in this place. The questionnaire findings revealed that the great majority of Syrian refugees want to leave as soon as they have the opportunity to do.

The urban geography of these spaces plays a significant role besides the important aspects of governance. It is almost a “bare life” zone according to their testimonies about their daily routines (Herz 2013). The image it has adds many stresses on those living in it. Throughout the many visits the researcher made to these areas between October 2012 and May 2013, the levels of adaptability and integration of the Syrian refugees with Egyptians, and with the urban public spaces where they live and interact have changed noticeably.

<b>Refugee camps' Urban, socio-economic and political structure discourse</b>	
<b>Marginalized and Excluded</b>	Othman corresponds to this aspect of a camp by virtue of its urban geography and accessibility
<b>Interaction with host communities</b>	
<b>Should they have a clearly marked perimeter</b>	In a much as it is a distant and excluded place.
<b>Spatial organization</b>	No central density or areas for gathering. It looked like a place to contain people.
<b>Does a camp have a minimum/ maximum size of population density?</b>	Here it has a maximum capacity to take in people. It is difficult to extend the boundaries.
<b>People tend to like leaving the camp?</b>	A very high residential mobility
<b>What activities should be developed in it (economic, political, cultural and social)</b>	To date, poor types of ad hoc economic activities,
<b>What services /urban services should be there</b>	It has the average urban services, yet ?
<b>Humanitarian regime,</b>	Faith-based regime
<b>Normal order is de facto suspended (Agamben 1995 cited in Al Sayyad and Roy 2006)</b>	It is definitely not a "normal" order, yet it is not similar to the order of the camp, so it works as an in-between
<b>Scales of mobility (daily movements, in/out migration, settlement of new migrant communities)</b>	not investigated

## **Appendix 5: Elaboration on the Current State of the Relationships of Syrian Refugee Community with other refugees and with each other,**

### **5.1 Relationships to other refugee communities,**

For an average Syrian who lives in Cairo, there are not many channels of interaction with other refugee communities. Some urban geographies facilitate some kinds of interaction while others do not. The reported channels are few and are listed below:

- a) Social interaction with the Iraqi refugees in Sitta October,
- b) Interaction with the Sudanese in Ataba (downtown Cairo) where many Syrians (who are assumed to have been engaged in organized begging) live in the hotels surrounding the area and interact directly with the hub of Sudanese cafés shops,
- c) Meeting Sudanese and Somalis in some Nasr City districts where many Somalis and Sudanese have settled, or in some areas of Zaitoun, Ain Shams, Faisal, and Ard El Liwa.

It is very important to consider the fact that many individuals among the African refugee community expressed uncomfortable feelings towards the Syrians as being privileged by the Egyptian community, government and humanitarian organizations as they feel that they are being discriminated against. The UNHCR has decided to allocate 10% of the budget for the Syrian refugees to serve other refugee communities, yet how inclusive that approach will be remains to be seen (RRP 2013).

These are not all genuine interaction channels. Refugees may meet accidentally on the premises of refugee-specific services such as the lobby of the Tadamon Centre in Sitta October, Caritas and AMERA. Some interactions with older refugee and migrant communities are happening in Heliopolis in a more genuine way, such as church communities which have recently started setting up some support channels to the Syrian Christian community (who are mostly middle class groups who are affected by dwindling resources and discrimination).

It is interesting to note that the Palestinian Syrians who are arriving in the recent influxes are more widely distributed and interacting with the Syrians than with the Palestinians who have been arriving in Egypt since 1948.

## **5.2 Relationships with each other,**

Class, position on the Syrian regime/ uprising, geographical allocation, religious, ethnical and sectarian affiliations, family and kin networks are all determinant factors in the way in which Syrians are communicating with each other. Networks are being created among people of the same city of origin, the same ethnicity, political affiliation, sectarian or minority origin, religion and “de facto” interaction of “sharing the same space”. Many interactions are happening through community nodes or meeting points such as Al Hosari park, and through a liaison entity such as charitable organizations, NGOs and other structures.



## **Appendix 6: More on Recommendations and Scenarios for the City's Future from a Refugee Perspective:**

### **6.1. Recommendations**

#### **6.1.1 Outreaching**

- Refugees' area guide: Develop community maps for the refugees on the local urban level encompassing the important landmarks they would need to recognize in order to navigate in their daily lives (schools, urban administration, health centers, etc...)
- Support and assure the role of community nodes and gathering points through development and continuous maintenance of these nodes and develop outreaching strategies on local levels assisted by local residents, who are the experts in their areas.

#### **6.1.2 Support self-organized of refugee communities,**

- Develop the institutional capacity of local refugee-and host community's structures and support their efforts in creating data bases for job placements, shelter, services and other activities, and ultimately collate these efforts on city-wide and country- wide levels.

#### **6.1.3 Livelihoods,**

- Develop community-based institutional support that aims at alleviating the huge dependency on aid organizations and on extra-local channels of support. Such approaches entail a thorough understanding of the local politics and systems in order to build on the strengths of the target communities and maximize use of their own resources.

#### **6.1.4 Women's security,**

- Set in place wider frameworks of women- friendly cities and utilize the 'Safer Cities' approach; like the ones of the UN Habitat, in order to support the creation of safer environments for women and girls, especially in light of the recent unrest and insecurities in Cairo for women, and develop gender-sensitive plans accordingly.

### **6.2 Future Outlook**

An educated guess on Scenarios for the Syrian Refugees in Cairo with questions on the city level from a refugee perspective:

#### **6.2.1 Scenario 1: Enduring Refugee Crisis without Policy Intervention**

If the situation in Egypt remains relatively secure and the entry visa policy does not change, the numbers of Syrians arriving will show only a slight increase as the international community and Egypt (according to the 1954 agreement) will continue to conduct a refugee status determination processes. Despite the fact that some might return or go to a third country, community cohesion pull factors and family reunion will attract more Syrians to Egypt, yet in much smaller numbers. These groups will tend to cluster around other Syrians, most probably; Syrians will concentrate more in specific areas leaving areas of smaller concentrations in order to have access to intra-Syrian community protection mechanisms. They might also be pushed out of specific areas due to exhaustion of charity support, tensions with poor or politicized Egyptians or in worse cases forced ejection. Others might need to be more closely attached to protection of power brokers in escape of public rejection and most probably these will be exploitative ones.

#### 6.2.2 Scenario 2: Radical Increase of Syrian Refugee Influx with Policy Intervention

When or if the no-entry visa requirement is re-instated, and when it is relatively secure in Egypt, the number of Syrians might increase dramatically, and the city will continue to accommodate the incomers. However, avenues of absorption are going to be different and charity support is no longer expected to take a large share of the responsibility. Humanitarian systems will soon be overloaded and the Government of Egypt (GoE) is expected to do no more than allow entry as it will have to respond to its own domestic challenges at this stage. It might even create an insecure environment and other aggressive measures against refugees in order to offer more services or employment opportunities to Egyptians. In response, this will challenge refugees' communities' organization capabilities and their own self-support avenues. A larger number of refugees might fall into chronic and acute poverty.

A third scenario would consider a major conflict inside Egypt and be a significant push factor for Syrian refugees. However, as this is a 'worst- case' scenario and would involve various unpredictable drastic events, it has not been discussed.

The following questions could be raised in the quest of future implications and they also apply to Scenario One. In this case, the predicted increasing numbers will have a larger weight .The questions on the implications are discussed in the section below.

### 6.2.3 Questioning future scenarios from a refugee perspective,

Question 1: Given the deteriorating economic conditions, rising prices, costs of living and other hardships resulting from IMF loan conditionality, will the presence of increasing numbers of Syrian refugees among the urban poor provoke or exacerbate social tensions?

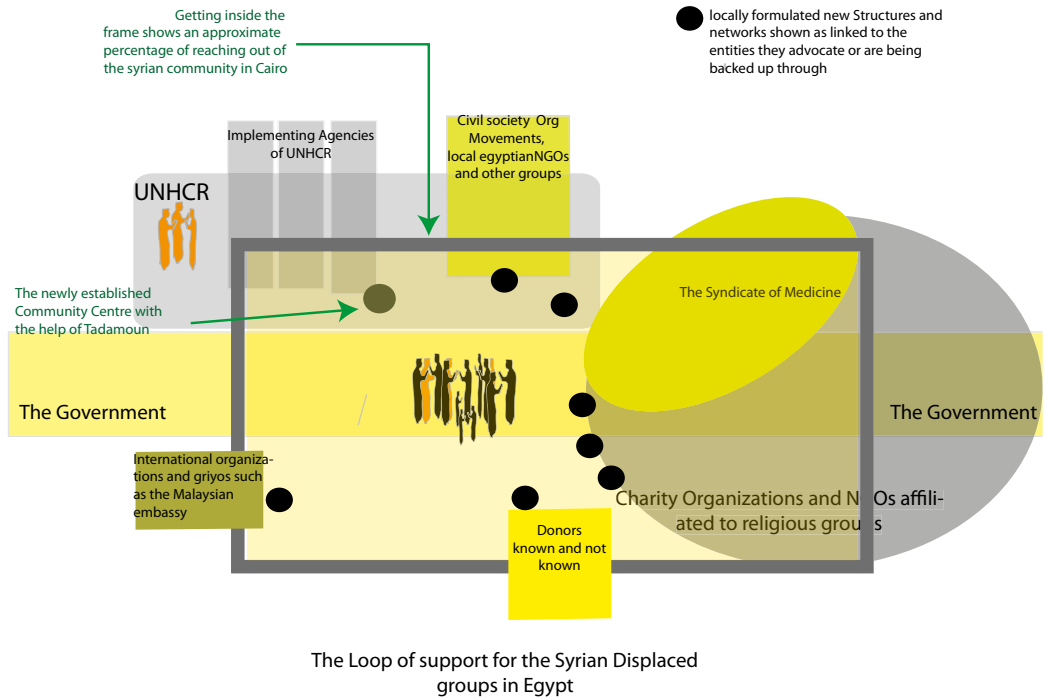
Question 2: Will the tumultuous times Egypt is going through evolve into further upheavals of the urban poor of Cairo, in a similar fashion to what happened in Tehran and other Iranian cities between 1991-1994, following the Islamic Revolution, and how will that affect refugees living in these areas (see footnote )?

These questions are based on many case studies. Following the Iranian revolution, Tehran and other Iranian cities had influxes of refugees from Iraq and later from Afghanistan by the mid 1980s. An estimated 120,000 to 300,000 Afghans took up residence in Tehran (Al Bayat 1997). This has partially led to and contributed to the renewed popular uprisings of the urban poor in early 1990s. These upheavals and clashes were mainly concerned with the deteriorating economic situations and the destruction of communities (ibid). Nairobi is another example in a country driven by internal political struggle and considered to be in volatile situation demonstrated through unrest during its previous constitutional elections in 2007 and after (Haysom discussion 2013; Anon 2013). It had changed policies concerning urban refugees (decreeing that they were no longer accepted in urban areas and called for relocating them in camps) since December 2012 which resulted in exacerbated abuses and violence against refugees. Many of those who could afford to left for other countries and the ones who could not afford to leave have remained hidden (Access 2013).

Question 3: How will the dynamics of resentment and discrimination between the various refugee communities, essentially between African (mainly Sudanese, Somali, and Ethiopian) and Arab (mainly Iraqi, Palestinian and Syrian) groups, play out?

Question 4: As refugees tend to cluster together, how likely is it that Cairo will eventually have specific, designated areas accommodating refugees only, and will this create a tier system in which the most impoverished are displaced further and further from the city center and services?.

**Appendix 7: An earlier version of the Actors' and Networks map  
Figure 28 (in February 2013)**



The main idea behind putting this earlier figure is to show the change in power relations and in outreaching. The UN agencies seem much more involved now than before

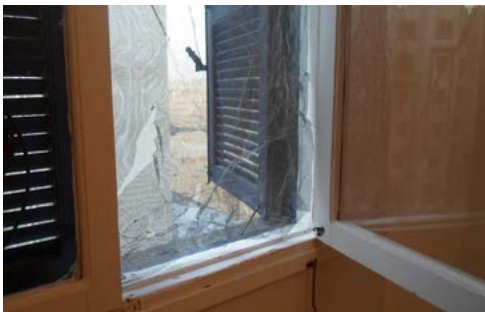
## Appendix 8: Photos: domestic adaptation strategies and more



Some adaptations in bathrooms through compensating for non-presence of tap water and through installing heaters



Installing new pavement in a way that allows water to slope when cleaning by water and furnishing in a simple way



Opening more windows



Indeed open windows of this photo belonged to Syrian Families in Masaken Othman (Al Omar 2012)



**Many Syrian families mentioned installing this pavement at door-steps to help in cleaning each room with water**







## خلاصة

تُمنع هذه الدراسة النظرَ إلى الطرق التي يشقُّ بها اللاجئون السوريون دروبهم في مدينة القاهرة، العاصمةَ العملاقة، وتُراقبُ بعين الفاحصِ الفراغات العمرانية التي يشغلونها من خلال دراسة حقلية مستفيضة وخلفية أوسع عن التركيب الاجتماعي والسياسي للمدينة وديناميات التغيير والأوضاع السياسية على المستويات المحلية والوطنية والإقليمية. للقاهرة خصائص مميزة لتجربة اللجوء تتجلى من خلال أصقاعها المترامية وتركيباتها العمرانية وفراغاتها المترامية والمجزأة. فهي تتيح فرصاً متعددة بأفاق مختلفة لمن يقصد سبلها للإيواء. إلا أنها، تُركن الفقراء إلى الهوامش وتضعهم أمام خيارات حماية ومساعدة مهلهلة، غير أنها تعلمهم استراتيجيات البقاء. تتكون فراغات اللجوء العمرانية من بنى فيزيائية وعلاقات ديناميكية، مشاعر، تدفقات داخلية وخارجية من البشر، وتكمن فيها معانٍ وإحباطات معقدة. يشحن تلك الفراغات أيضاً علاقات سلوكيات إجتماعية واقتصادية ونفسية رسمية وغير رسمية وهي تنشأ من تفاعل معقد لعوامل جاذبة ونايذة تتعلق بالخلفية الإجتماعية والاقتصادية والسياسية للاجئ وبالتجارب المتنوعة التي تطرحها المدينة.

يموضع اللاجئون أنفسهم فراغياً حول عوامل مشتركة، ويشكلون مجتمعات ويتنقلون من، إلى وضمن المدينة باحثين عن خيارات أفضل. ويبدو الهاجس الإنساني حول حماية اللاجئين متأثراً بشكل بالغ بالبنى الإجتماعية السياسية المحلية بطريقة فجة وامتيازة بين ثلاثة فراغات عمرانية نموذجية: مدينة ذات أسوار، مشروع إسكان عام على أطرف المدينة، وفي منطقة من المناطق غير الرسمية. تُظهر هذه الفراغات آليات في تزويد المساعدة والحماية للاجئين ذات صلة وثيقة بأنماط الحوكمة فيها. هناك سيناريوهات متعددة لمستقبل القاهرة كمقصد للجوء مع الاضطرابات التي تجري فيها هذه الأيام، وهي بالنسبة للسوريين، غامضة وملتبسة ومرتبطة بتوقعات الاستقرار السياسي للمستقبلي للبلاد.



# إقرار

هذه الرسالة مقدمة في جامعة عين شمس وجامعة شوتجارت للحصول على درجة العمران المتكامل والتصميم المستدام. إن العمل الذي تحويه هذه الرسالة قد تم إنجازه بمعرفة الباحث سنة ...

هذا ويقر الباحث أن العمل المقدم هو خلاصة بحثه الشخصي وأنه قد اتبع الأسلوب العلمي السليم في الإشارة إلى المواد المؤخوذه من المراجع العلمية كل في مكانه في مختلف أجزاء الرسالة..

وهذا إقرار مني بذلك،،،

التوقيع:

الباحث:

رشا عروس

التاريخ: /



# الشكل العمرانى والحكم الرشيد وأوضاع اللاجئين

مأزق اللاجئين السوريين في التنقل في الفراغات العمرانية للقاهرة،

## وتعقيدات الحوكمة في الأزمنة المضطربة

مقدمة للحصول على درجة الماجستير في العمران المتكامل والتصميم المستدام

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التوقيع

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أ.د. ....  
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تاريخ المناقشة: .....

الدراسات العليا

أجيزت الرسالة بتاريخ: .....

موافقة مجلس الجامعة .../.../...

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جامعة عين شمس



جامعة شتوتغارت



MM/DD/YYYY



# الشكل العمرانى والحكم الرشيد وأوضاع اللاجئين مأزق اللاجئين السوريين في التنقل في الفراغات العمرانية للقاهرة، وتعقيدات الحوكمة في الأزمنة المضطربة

رسالة مقدمة للحصول على درجة الماجستير في العمران المتكامل والتصميم المستدام

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