ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Investigating the impact of urban planning policies on urban division in Cairo, Egypt: The case of El-Maadi and Dar El-Salam

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Abstract   Urban division is a process formed by the reaction of several forces, among which, the role of urban policies in shaping division proves high prominence. Cairo witnesses a spatial pattern of division where contrasting socioeconomic areas exist in close proximity. Although some researchers have recently addressed this division in Cairo, its relation with urban policies has always been generalized regardless the specificity of location. This research aims at understanding the relation between urban policies and socioeconomic division on a micro level by investigating how broad urban policies are reflected on a certain part of the city leading to its division. Accordingly, the research adopts a twofold methodology. The first is for selecting the case study which leads to choosing the divided area of (El-Maadi) and (Dar El-Salam). The second is for analyzing the relation with urban policies by forming a relations diagram with lines of causes and influence described with respect to time. The research shows a strong relation between division and urban policies. It is concluded that division is also affected by how urban policies interact with each other and with the characteristics of the area. This puts the generalization of urban policies affecting division under question.

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1. Introduction

Urban division has been one of the current manifestations of many rapidly growing cities, especially those in the third world countries. Defined simply as the existence of areas with different or contrasting characteristics, urban division has been targeted by many researchers. This is not for the newness of the phenomenon, but for the newness of its causes and the invidious differentiation it comes with [1,2]. Division is also claimed to be a function of space, where different spatial contexts lead to different forms and impacts on division [2,3], and a function of time which is an important factor affecting its evolution and change. Among the several forms of division, one of the most prominent is the socioeconomic form. This is represented by the differentiation of groups in space according to status, class, and income and translated later into an

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equitable distribution of services and opportunities [4,5]. The distribution pattern of the socioeconomic different groups in a given city has been continuously changing with forces of dynamism and natural growth. In many current cities, different groups are unexpectedly in close proximity despite the continuously increasing socioeconomic gap between them [6,7]. Actually, this current spatial pattern can be double-sided. On one side, it can be a form of social mix and neighborhood diversity, while on the other side, it can probably turn to spatial and social segregation or urban fragmentation. That is why studying urban division has grasped the interest of researchers who subsequently started to develop several approaches for addressing the issue [8].

The emergence of study approaches has been mainly for the aim of a comprehensive understanding of the different forces and mechanisms of socioeconomic division. One of the most influential is the institutional approach. It defines the role of individuals in governments and organizations and how their changing ideologies are effective as well as the role of housing and urban policies in shaping a city's pattern. A number of researchers have tackled the role of policies in shaping division from the aspects of physical patterns or social relations. Moreover, some authors work on a national scale by stating the general state policies that have contributed in division [8,9]. Others address a finer scale by examining policies on a given city or on specific areas and concentrations of poverty inside the same city, and this mostly takes place in areas where a local governance scheme is applied [10–12]. These previous studies tend to explore forces caused by urban policies and leading to division through a descriptive or a narrative approach. In another context, a researcher, K. Landman, emphasized that urban fragmentation should be addressed through a systemic view comprising descriptions of relationships and internal lines of influence, not just cause and effect descriptions. Considering both views together can put the previous narrative methods of describing the relation between urban policies and division under a probable risk of neglecting some aspects [13].

Despite all the previously mentioned attempts by researchers in the field, research addressing the case of Cairo is relatively sparse. This is, in fact, a deficiency especially as Cairo is one of the world's megacities. Moreover, it has been observed to be one of the main cities affected by urban division in Egypt. It is a logical consequence after the existence of several indicators of division. These include the spread of an increasing number of gated communities along its peripheries, the presence of more than 3 million people in 2007 [14] living in informal settlements, and more than 800 thousands people in 2006 [15] migrating to Cairo. This has made Cairo a city with a paradoxical state of development [16], not in a pattern form of poverty pockets, but rather in the form of a close proximity of different or contrasting socioeconomic groups [17]. Therefore, some researchers have started exploring the phenomenon either by studying the affecting causes [9] or by examining the social cohesion or segregation in different areas [18]. Nevertheless, this current pattern of division represented in the close of the rich and the poor has not been deeply studied in Cairo. In addition, when urban policies are addressed, they are generalized on a national or city scale regardless the specificity of location. The Open Door policy, the failure of public housing provision, the market-oriented approach, and the rent controls are determined as the main influential policies in changing the

housing patterns or in causing division in Cairo [9,19]. This disagrees with the claim of researchers stating that different contexts and characteristics of areas are effective in the actions or outcomes translated from even the same policy [20].

In short, there is an incomplete understanding of the relation between division and urban policies. This is caused, especially in Egypt, by the fewness of research targeting the issue and the generalization approach in addressing it, while this gap is caused in other research by narrating causes and effects without considering the complexity of the process. In this respect, the proposed research aims at explaining how urban policies have played a role in shaping the pattern of division in a micro (neighborhood) level in Cairo by considering the complexity of the process. The value of this research lies in two main points:

- The micro-scale on which the relation with urban policies is examined, in contrary to the national scale addressed by other research on Cairo.
- The methodology of studying the relation, described later in detail, in contrary to the cause and effect description.

However, the research has been faced with one main limitation which is the absence of a recent map for the distribution of different socioeconomic groups in Cairo. A map as such would have helped in determining divided areas where different socioeconomic groups are in close proximity, and from which a relevant case study can be selected to represent the micro-scale targeted by the research. Therefore, it has been important to formulate an applicable methodology for selection. Methodologies adopted by the research are described in the following section. After the case study's selection, a brief description of its urban evolution is presented followed by investigating the relation between urban policies and its transformation to division. Following the discussion of results, the paper ends with a concise conclusion in the final section.

2. Methods and tools

The research adopts a twofold methodology: one for selecting the case study for the research, and the other for analyzing its relation with urban planning policies.

2.1. Methodology of selection

It depends on using a number of thematic maps as filtration tools layered in a certain order for narrowing the search for selection. These filtration tools are applied as follows:

- Filter I: The map of Cairo expansion across time [17] is applied to classify Cairo based upon the historic evolution of its residential areas. This can put the divided areas within a time frame that is beneficial later in the analysis of policies' relations. Accordingly, three main rings of evolution are formulated.
- Filter II: A Google Earth satellite image in high resolution for Cairo is examined to give a background, by observation, to the locations of proximity of high and low socioeconomic areas. This first stage of determination takes place on the basis of some urban fabric indicators [21].