

Thesen zur Dissertation

Designing Urban National Memory

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The Statement of the Problem, Aim, Questions and Objectives

National and international events have indelibly imprinted human lives; events might be unique and may happen once in a lifetime, but it can change people's lives entirely or leave its mark. The 25th January 2011 uprising in Egypt is one of the events that caused unprecedented outpour of public and private reflections on the correlation between the tangible urban spaces and the intelligible intangible memories. Especially *Tahrir* square in the center of Cairo, in Egypt. It holds the national symbolic memory of the 25th January uprising; it is the place from which the modern revolutionary history has begun. Further, it also holds a competitive narratives, for some, it became a symbol that conveys the meaning of cooperation, and democracy. However, for others, the square conveys the meaning of chaos, conflict, and Conspiracy theory.

Undoubtedly, the different competing narratives and the transforming from a regime to another new one unveiled the conflicted history between different society members. Also, unveiled the fact that a lot of historical information has not uncovered yet, information which constituted the Egyptians' national memory for decades. This situation raised the need of renationalizing the historical consciousness, reviewing the Egyptian national memory with consideration of the competing narratives. It has been noticed that, in post-conflict Egypt, the process of coming to terms with the past and at the same time moving forward could be difficult; similar to situations of other countries when a despotic regime collapses or a war comes to an end, or a revolution takes place. The supporters of the new and old regimes must somehow find a way of living together to reconcile their different point of views and histories. That often happens at a price: not to talk about the past; it is merely repressed. However, that probably carries the danger of violent conflict in the future, which is why it is essential to find out practical means of coming to terms with the past, and renationalizing the country's memory. ***Therefore, the study viewed that the Egyptian urban spaces could be a mean of narrating the national memory, overcoming the past, further, dissolving the boundaries between the different competing narratives.***

In advance, that required specific attention to observe the prevailing narratives which constituted the national memory of Egypt through history especially over the past 60 years, to investigate the pattern of the inherited concepts which were and still influence the memory work: the remembering and forgetting processes through urban spaces. With special focus to read *Tahrir* urban space's memories including the current metamorphose of memories which have influenced by both the country's prevailing and competing narratives of people who live in as well. Noticeably, due to the current political, social, cultural change, the Egyptian urban spaces, the city patterns, and its detailed image are changing. Reading this change will help analyse its effect and influences in relation to the country national memory. ***Therefore, The study aimed to*** review the role of memory in architecture and urban design, and developing a methodological framework which is arguing for a reconsideration of national memory when designing Egyptian urban spaces, further to benefit from the German experience after the Second World War, to generate the learned lessons.

The study based on the hypothesis that, there is no fixed formula for all countries to renationalize the historical consciousness of memory through urban spaces, however, lessons to be learned from Germany experience could be a driving dimension when designing Egyptian urban spaces with a concept of memory as an essential factor.

To guide the validity of hypothesis, a set of research questions and objectives are thus formulated: The thesis mainly quested the necessity of developing a methodological framework for redesigning the Egyptian city urban spaces by considering the national memory, especially after the 25th uprising. ***Therefore, it proposes three sub-questions which are leading to a final one as follows:***

1. Why memory is an essential factor when designing urban spaces?

Objectives: To capture the interrelation between memory and urban space, to reach developing a political psychosocial (PPS.) analytical model.

2. How the National Memory of Egypt was constituted through history, and how to read its representations in urban space until the current situation?

Objectives: to review the prevailing narratives which unveiled the pattern of inherited concepts which was and still influence the national memory of Egypt. Further, reading representations of memory in city urban fabric; reading the case study of *Tahrir* Square.

3. What are the means of nationalizing memory through urban space?

Objectives: To investigate the crucial political breaks which brought significant changes to the Germans' thought about their national memory and history. Further, exploring and reading of relevant examples which clarify

how urban space contributes to constituting the concept of National Memory in the German Case. Also, investigating the different remembrance culture between East and West Germany.

The Final question: *What are the learned lessons from both the Egyptian past and the German experience in constituting their national memory through urban spaces?*

Objectives: To introduce learned lessons from both; studying the Egyptian past of constituting its national memory until recent time. Also, learned lessons derived from the German experience.

The State of Art

Worldwide, the interrelation between memory, architecture, and urban space has been the special focus of many studies, for instance, *Eleni Bastéa in her Book "Memory and Architecture,"* investigating perspectives from urbanism, history, psychology, and sociology. Bastéa's study presented different insights from various fields are given by many international researchers; however, a common discipline between those insights was not precise and needed more investigation and interpretation of other references of literature review. ***Therefore, the thesis first developed a common conceptualization; reached to be an analytical model which will help to analyze the memory of place. It tried to approach the urban space as a political, psychological, social-cultural tool which conveys memories and narratives, in addition to interacting with the citizens' thoughts.***

As for Egypt, "memory and urban space" is a form of knowledge has been neglected for too long in architecture and urban design in Egypt. Yet, within the Egyptian context after the 25th revolution and via underlying the power of public spaces especially *Tahrir* square few studies have tackled the memory of the Egyptian urban spaces; one was introduced by *Dr. Mohamed Dessouki*, he argued the interrelation between collective memory and urban space, by using a methodology based on the actor- Network theory, a material-semiotic methodology to understand the memory-driven interactions in urban space.

On the other hand, the political circumstances raised an international researchers' interest, for example *Dr. Judy Barsalou* published a scientific paper titled "Post-Mubarak Egypt: History, Collective Memory, and Memorialization", addresses the question of how have protagonists in Egypt's transition used historical narratives and memorialization to promote their diverse agendas since the fall of Mubarak.

Historians like *Khaled Fahmy*, politicians like *Amr Hamzay*, wrote about Egypt transition period and the need of renationalizing its history. ***However, none of them explained the means of doing that with a connection to urban spaces or tried to tackle the experience of another country to learn lessons. Hence, the research aimed at developing a methodological framework that should contribute in renationalizing the memory through urban space.***

Further, investigating a wide range of lessons to learn from other countries' experiences: it has been found that the German nation has the best experts, when coming to terms with the past, specifically in their modern history, started after the Second World War, (with considering the Nazi Era as a pivot anchor). To nationalize their history, Germans have had to re-evaluate two very different histories under two different dictatorships: First, the Nazi era, Second, the Communist Era in East Germany. Even more, the Germans had to deal with the different remembrance culture between the East and West. For this reason, the dissertation will trace the memories in Dresden city center, and Cologne, to investigate the validity of the developed political psychosocial analytical model in reading the multi-layers of memory.

That was not possible without the abundant references of Germany National Memory, references such like, *Stefan Berger study, "Germany, The many mutations of a belated nation," Aleida Assmann, "Culture of Remembrance," Rudy Koshar, "Germany's Transient Pasts: preservation and National memory in the twentieth century," Mark Jarzombek, "Disguised Visibilities, Dresden/'Dresden',"* - just to name a few studies.

Noteworthy, that every society has to find its way of dealing with the past, renationalize the country's memory; Formulae that have worked in Germany may be useless in Egypt. Nonetheless, societies which are currently in a state of upheaval can undoubtedly benefit from others' experiences, and particularly from their failures. Hence, some learned lessons are the expected result of the research.

Methodology (Methodological Framework)

The study as a whole applied *inductive analytical methodology* as it moves from a particular situation in Egypt to study and analyze the German experience, and finally to infer broad general learned lessons for the Egyptian case. *It consists of four parts:*

Part One: Initial Foundation: emphasized the interrelationship between memory and urban space:

Chapter One: Introduction: Identified the study scope, assumed hypothesis, determined questions, main objectives, via *Grounded theory methodology - semi-structured interviews - Group discussions* to develop the methodological Framework of the thesis.

Chapter Two: Perspectives from Urbanism, History, Psychology and Urban Sociology: Introduced an overview of top topics to capture the interrelation between memory and urban space, via *meta-synthesis literature review* reached to develop a political-psychosocial (PPS.) analytical model.

Part Two: Egypt National Memory: explored how Egypt national memory was constituted through history.

Chapter Three: Prevailing Narratives and Inherited Concepts: Introduced historical Preview of the prevailing narratives via *Inductive reasoning method* to generate the conceptualization of the pattern of inherited concepts which influence the remembering and forgetting processes in the urban space.

Chapter Four: Reading Tahrir Square: explained historical case study “Tahrir Square, Cairo” analyzed by the developed analytical model (PPS.) to de-mask the historical and active processes of remembering and forgetting in the Egyptian urban space. Further, to identify the memory’s influences, actors and the reflection of the “Inherited concepts”.

Part Three: Germany, National Memory: explored how Germany nationalized memory through urban spaces.

Chapter Five: Nationalizing Memory through Urban Space: reviewed the important breaks which led to significant changes to the Germans' thought about their national history, reached to the generalizations about the means of renationalizing memory in urban spaces. Via *inductive reasoning method –Case Study Buchenwald Concentration Camp, research methods includes site visit, visual analysis, observation, and a general analysis considering the aspects of the (PPS) model.*

Chapter Six: Germany, East, West Remembrance Culture: Investigated the different remembrance culture between East and West Germany. Two case studies have been tackled Dresden and Cologne. Via *Inductive reasoning method Multi-Case Studies, cities visit, visual analysis, observation, Macro and Micro scale examples- analysis by (PPS) model.*

Chapter Seven: Representation of Meanings: Examined the reflection of the subjective aspect "memory of places" associated with meanings, humane values, to view how the memorial’s complexity, plays a role in representing a multiplicity of memory. Via *Chosen memorials associated with essential humane values, and a general analysis considering the aspects the (PPS) model.*

Part Four: Conclusions: Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Recommendations: Discussed the thesis’ key findings, the conclusion’s interpretation of the literature review and the answers of the research’s questions. Furthermore, the study's evaluation, and Recommendations for practice field, policy makers, and future researches.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Researches

The necessity of nationalizing the memory through the urban space for the post-conflict Egyptian society: Although there was an invitation, immediately after the 25th revolution, to renationalize the historical consciousness and redesign the city public urban spaces especially Tahrir square to unveil the memories of the place, after eight-year, no action has been done. Hence, the research emphasizes the necessity of taking action, in order to fill the gap between the recent designing of Egyptian urban spaces and the art of memorization. So the conclusions of the research answered three sub-questions as follows:

(A1) **Memory is an essential factor when designing urban spaces,** due to the interrelationship between both of them: since both citizens and urban space receive the imprints of each other, the change of urban space could confirm, erase, or even heal memories. On the other hand, people change in their life cycle; they generate new memories which convey their prevailing narratives. Hence, the citizens’ attachment to their city mainly depends on how extent their city express them, communicate with and reflect their memories.

(A2) **Upon investigation of two prevailing narratives “Egypt as Pharaohs’ Country”-“Modern Egypt (Egypt Mohamed Ali),” the national memory of Egypt was constituted through history, mainly derived by a pattern of**

three key concepts: First, the centralization of the rule which reflected on urbanism. Second, the power of public could bring significant changes on the society, and imprint its clear memory on the urban fabric. However, the divine concept (the third) of the ruler was always playing a key role to control the public perception by emphasizing the ruler's power. *Reading the representations of memories in the Egyptian urban spaces via the developed analytical model "PPS,"* helped to unveil the various memories' actors, memory political, psychosocial influences, also the reflection of the inherited concepts. It concluded that through history, the Egyptian National memory mostly was and still a political construction in the first place (always based on official narrative), manipulated by the rulers to emphasize their power. That conclusion agrees with and confirms what was stated by many historians and researchers reviewed in the literature chapter.

(A3) Regarding, the means of nationalizing memory through urban space: by conducting the German case, It concluded to: **First**, nation has to evaluate the past experience with ascending voice, in order to identify the points of pride, and admit past mistakes. In this only case, the narrative of national memory could work as a mean of nearing the distances between competing narratives. **Second**, the redesign of urban space with consideration of National memory could open a new channel allow public participation. However, that only possible in the shed of a democratic atmosphere. **Third**, viewing the "memory of place" as a subjective aspect, associated with meaning; via highlighting the meaningful message which is held by urban space.

Finally, As for Egypt, the most learned lessons is acknowledging the pattern of the concepts inherited from the Egyptian past which affected the prevailing narratives, which, in turn, formed the National Memory, *is considered a first step to evaluate the past, and to renationalize the Egyptians' historical consciousness.* Also, Upon reading Tahrir Square, urban space has the power to narrate the city's history including all competing narratives, not only the official one (due to political agenda). Hence, the study of national memory in Egypt requires an understanding of the multiple voices of conflicted agents (memory actors). So, it is important to try to find common denominators between the opposing memories, to overcome the social and political differences even on a symbolic level. That confirms the definition of national memory, which was explained at the start of the study. On the other hand, neglecting "the memories as a driving dimension" when redesigning Tahrir square, could lead to a conflict in the future, and impact negatively the public attachment to the city's public places; widen the gap between them.

Learned lessons which are drawn from the study of the German case: The German case unveiled the fact that citizens, designers, and governors will be only able to understand the present of the city and plan to the future **if they trace its past and acknowledge it, search for remembrance places and return to the collective heritage and concentrate on the country's national identity.** The study revealed that the political division which has happened post-World War Two (during the cold war) caused the suffering of the Germans. And, that the "Nation Suffering" is the expected result of dictatorship policies since power without respect of humanity finally leads to a profound crisis of the national paradigm. **Thus, nations must not support any dictator ruler; as they will reap what has been planted and will pay the price in the end. On the other hand, they should work on supporting the constitution that preserves their power and limits the rulers' authorities.** The political freedom could lead to real public participation, that reflects on the designing of the country's urban spaces with consideration of the national narrative. A national narrative which is not only based on the state-sponsored official narrative but considers the collective public memories.

Thus, designing urban spaces with consideration of national memory provides many contributions for the future; provides an experience to learn more than just being memorial sites. In process working on two main applications: **First**, the study revealed the need for a practical application which could provide a set of criteria of "Designing Memory". That aims to build a bridge between research and design practice. **Second, in order to develop Egypt national memory and to revive the architectural heritage of the Egyptian city:** Producing a national *memoryscape* map is necessary. It should consist of multiple layers of histories with consideration of the various collective memories. That to be used in urban analysis and site surveys of any existing public space in a historical context. That *memoryscape* map is to be considered as an additional layer among other maps/layers of urban space analysis. **Finally, although national memory does not often represent the whole truth, it should serve the progress of nations and encourage coexistence with their differences. It is one of the means of learning the cultural diversity that should be paid more attention to urban spaces.**