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Summer School Urban Design 2007

## **“The Identity of Architecture and Urban Structure in the Context of the Historic Islamic / Arabic Town”**

**Case study and urban design Bab Al Sharyah, Cairo**

### **REPORT**



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**“The Identity of Architecture and Urban Structure in the Context of the  
Historic Islamic / Arabic Town”**

**Case study and urban design Bab Al Sharyah, Cairo**

University of Cairo, Giza, Department of Architecture, 21st October – 03rd November 2007

**REPORT**

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Host and cooperation partner:

University of Cairo, Faculty of Engineering, Department of Architecture

Participants:

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and Design

University of Damascus, Faculty of Architecture

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## Introduction

In Cairo, a mega-city with a population of more than 16 million inhabitants, the topic of the Summer School – urban design of historic Islamic-Arabic towns - is in correlation with the urbanisation and globalization of the whole inner city.

The world cultural heritage of the historic Islamic-Arabic town is one important element of this development process. The original structures and the historic monuments and buildings must be protected and rehabilitated to maintain the identity and the character of the town. At the same time the city must be prepared for the requirements of international competition between cities. World cultural heritage and innovation for future development are not conflicts in urban planning.

In the case study area Bab Al Sharyah we examined a situation where both poles, tradition and innovation, can fit together in synthesis for sustainable urban development. The needs of the inhabitants, the respect for historic architecture, the characteristics of the existing urban structure, the lack of open space and the challenges of a chaotic traffic situation formed the basis for the studies in the workshop.

In Cairo, the building fabric in many historic districts is in a critical state. Social segregation has taken place over decades, and the actual state of development planning is often not satisfactory for the protection and revitalization of the historic quarters. Otherwise the traditional structure of the historic quarters is still extant, and radical transformation, through modern structures like main streets and large-scale buildings, occurs only in particular cases. There is a great challenge for strategic and conceptual planning for these districts. Today the most important questions are: How to encourage sustainable development? How to combine the protection of historic structures and listed buildings with the challenge of innovative and vital development reflecting economic, social and cultural affairs?



## Bab al Sharyah

The case study area of the summer school is Bab Al Sharyah area, situated at the northwest edge of the historic Islamic-Arabic town, in the eastern neighbourhood of Ramsis Place and Main Station. The Bab Al Sharyah area was appropriate for the summer school, because this quarter is on the one hand manageable in its extent, but on the other hand it reflects all of the important problems of a complex inner city situation. Furthermore, the urban structure of the Bab Al Sharyah area is endangered because of intense pressure for real estate development in this part of the city. The building fabric of many structures is very poor, there are several empty plots awaiting new investment, and in the centre of the district there is a brown field area with ruins of the Ayyubid Wall.



Bab Al Sharyah, Cairo, Study Area / Design Area



## Curriculum of the Summer School Urban Design

The workshop comprised three basic elements:

Lectures

Excursions

Studio work in mixed working groups

During the Summer School there were 15 lectures relevant to the topic. During the excursions we visited the Al-Azhar Park Development and Darb al Ahmar Rehabilitation Project in the Islamic Arabic town, new suburban developments in Heliopolis and New Cairo City as well as the City of Alexandria.

The studio work of the workshop in Cairo was organized in five working groups and each group was focussed on a specific point for the urban development of the Bab Al Sharyah area. Each working group was guided by one lecturer from the University of Cottbus.

By working collaboratively in practice and by discussing the different strategies for handling the challenges of the development of historic districts, we hope to have reached new insights and to have enriched the experiences of all participants.



## Focal Topics of the Working Groups

The five focal points are:

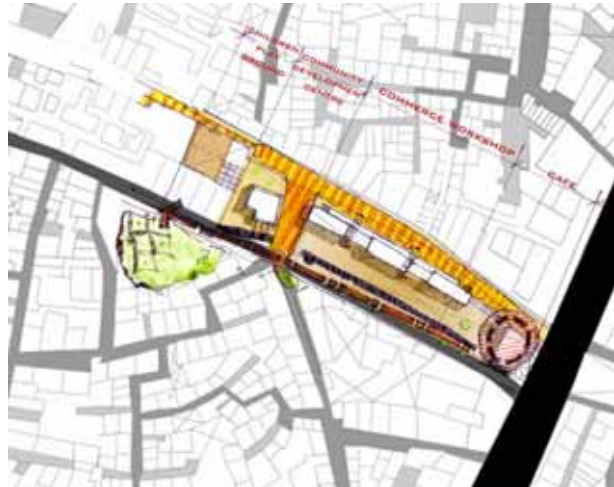
- Rehabilitation and development of public spaces
- Rehabilitation of historic building ensembles and creation of an initial impulse
- Design of new building typologies in the historic context
- Design of community based development strategies
- Urban design guidelines and the integration of traffic development



## Focal of the five working groups for the studio work

### Rehabilitation and development of public spaces

Links between the neighbouring quarters and the Bab Al Sharyah area,  
Relationship between the buildings and the public spaces,  
Definition of new public spaces,  
New Urban Design for the existing and new public spaces and their atmosphere and function



### Rehabilitation of historic building ensembles and creation of an initial impulse

New functions of specific important buildings, with an initial impulse for the development of the area,  
Strength the dialogue between historic monuments and the public space,  
Design of a rehabilitation process, which is more than the restoration of a building



### Design of new building typologies in the historic context

Design of new typologies for commercial and residential buildings for the empty lots of the Bab Al Sharyah area,  
Contemporary architecture with a new interpretation of traditional architectural elements,  
Qualification of the relationship between the historic building structure and new high-rise buildings along the main streets



### Designing community based development strategies

Definition of the stakeholders in the area and their interests,  
Strategies to support the local inhabitants to restore their buildings and to develop their enterprises,  
Strategies to integrate the local actors and inhabitants for the rehabilitation of the infrastructure and other public or common facilities,  
Strategies and actions for a bottom up development



## Urban Design guidelines and the integration of the traffic development

Definition of the role the Bab Al Saryah area is playing in the inner city of Cairo,  
 Definition of the main functions of the area,  
 Improvement of the traffic situation passing through and inside the quarter,  
 Definition of draft guidelines for the urban design of the quarter,  
 Urban design proposals for important urban situations of the area



## Lectures and Presentations of the Summer School Urban Design

21.10.2007 Prof. Dalila Elkerdany: Situation of the study area Bab Al Sharyah



Dr. Aly Hatem Gabr: History of the Architecture of the Islamic Cairo

22.10.2007 Prof. Dr. Samy Sabr: Urbanism in Cairo



23.10.2007 Prof. Heinz Nagler: Town, Space, Identity – Public Space as an Initial and Tool for the Urban Development , part 1: the ambiguity of space, or the approach of urban design



Prof. Heinz Nagler: Town, Space, Identity – Public Space as an Initial and Tool for the Urban Development, part 2: public space, sustainability and identity



24.10.2007 Christoph Wessling: Globalization and locality – the international competition between cities and the importance of an original townscape, character and identity



Frank Schwartz: From space-making to place-making. Experiences and Strategies of Urban Rehabilitation and Community Development



25.10.2007 Christoph Heinemann: The common and the specific - on adaptability of buildings and programmes



Jean-Marc Abcarius: Designing within the Historic Urban Context - Case Studies from Abcarius+Burns Architecture Design



28.10.2007 Prof. Dr. Aly Hassan, Alexandria: Sustainable traffic development and concepts for Egyptian Cities and neighbouring countries



30.10.2007 Christopher Burns: Contemporary Continuity in Portugal : Strategies for Conversion of Historic Buildings



Prof. Dr. Soheir Hawas: Modern Cairo



31.10.2007 Prof. Dr. Ziad Mouhanna, King Faisal Road - Damascus,  
Problems, Solutions and Perspectives



Prof. Dr. Robert Saliba, AU-Beirut:  
Cairo Beirut <> Beirut Cairo



01.11.2007 Prof. Inken Baller: Perceptions and recommendations of the  
TEMPUS Project: Rehabilitation of Historic Islamic Cities



03.11.2007 Presentation of the Urban Designs of the Working Groups for  
Bab al Sharyah



Opening of the Exhibition of the Urban Designs for Bab al  
Sharyah



## Participants

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