A MANIFESTO for the JUST CITY

volume 3

Edited by Roberto Rocco & Caroline Newton

TU Delft BK Bouwkunde

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the Centre for Just City

Colophon

A manifesto for the Just City

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This book is based on a online workshop and lecture series that took place over four days in October 2022. Representatives from 106 universities worldwide participated in the discussion. 315 students from 63 different academic institutions submitted 82 manifestos for publication.

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DEDICATED TO PURSUING SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH THE LENS OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT, THE CENTRE FOR THE JUST CITY VALUES ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE, DIVERSE THOUGHT, AND COMMITTED ACTION.

HTTPS://JUST-CITY.ORG

The Centre for the Just City was set up at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment at the Delft University of Technology in response to the pressing challenges of rampant social inequalities affecting the cohesion and the sustainability of cities and communities. Recognising the vital need to address these issues, the Centre emerged as a platform for research, education, and outreach activities for the creation of just cities. Since its inception, the Centre has been at the forefront of bridging theory and practice, fostering collaborations, and influencing policies and actions that contribute to making cities equitable, sustainable, and inclusive.

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UCL, London

HOW CAN WE DESIGN FOR THE FUTURE IF WE ARE NOT WILLING TO RECOGNIZE THE PAST?

For the past decades, cities of the global South have been struggling with various urban pressures including unprecedented increase in urban population, aggravated manifestations of climate change, desired segregation of gated communities, uncontrolled spread of informal settlements, as well as incompetence of existing gray and green infrastructures.

In 2023, the global South still stands at the periphery of the worldviews and its perspectives. We are still living by the rules of elite western dominance. Indigenous and traditional local approaches are being neglected and marginalized (Glück, 2015). As a part of the Global South, Contemporary Arab cities are not exempt from facing that hurdle. They are facing various urban pressures and are steadily losing many of their civilizational and cultural assets and values. Many flaws in the city's temporal-spatial structure are occuring, causing the city to be undeniably unjust to its inhabitants (Bell & Shalit, 2014). The city of Cairo, the capital of Egypt, stands as an emblematic example of the current age struggle to create a just city without disregarding the history, the heritage, and the culture of its citizens.

"WE SHAPE OUR BUILDINGS, THEREAFTER, THEY SHAPE US", Winston Churchill, 1943.

The old Arab city model has faded since the early nineteenth century due to various urban pressures (Bell & Shalit, 2014). In a highly globalized and modern world, cities, hosting more than half of the world's population, find themselves in a constant quest to create a competitive edge (Spijkerman, 2017). The old city was at a crossroads to restructure in order to emulate the **"ILLUSIVE PERFECT WESTERN MODEL"** (Sadiq, Taiyb, Fethi, & Khalil, 2020) while retaining its local identity and traditions (Naheed & Shooshtarian, 2022). This presumed development and uplifting of the city was carried out following a strict global westernized development agenda with no considerations to local contextuality and identity. Gentrification created a rigid image for wealth, homogenizing Egyptian culture, leading to collective numbness, and placeness (Spijkerman, 2017). Today, the city is struggling with the erosion of values and loss of tangible and intangible heritage. We find ourselves in a battle between the individualistic, consumerist, materialistic and lavishing lifestyle, and the social, spiritual, moral and simplistic lifestyle (Ghosh, 2018).

OUR [PAST] IS THE FOUNDATIONAL DEBUT TO CREATE A JUST, RESILIENT, INCLUSIVE, RESTORATIVE, SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE, EQUITABLE, AND UNIQUE [FUTURE].

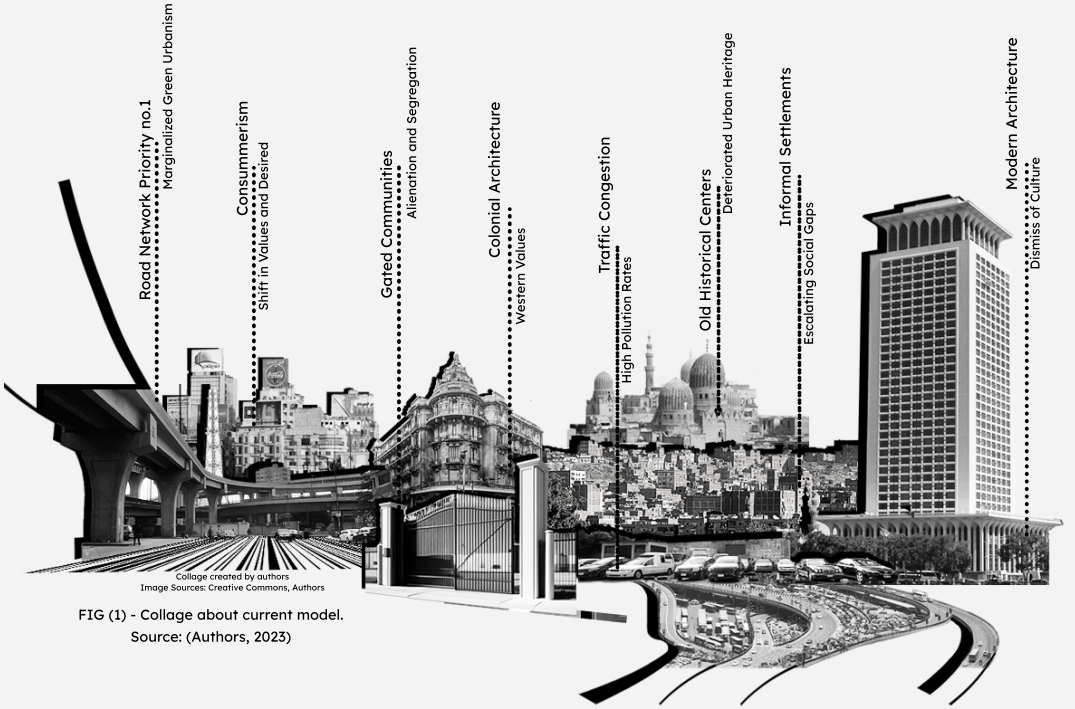
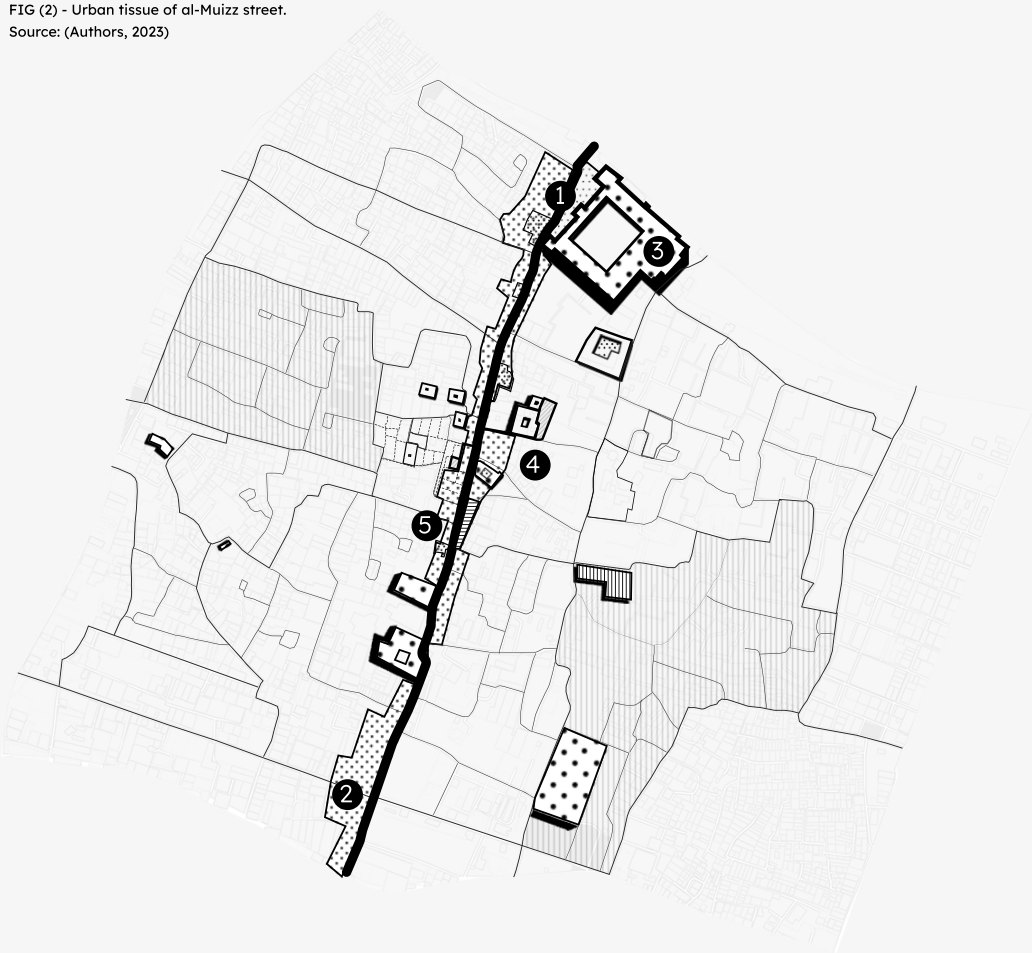


FIG (1) - Collage about current model.
Source: (Authors, 2023)

OLD CITY
MODEL

The Old city model was just, as it was based on a set of social, geographic and cultural factors that allowed its inhabitants to thrive. The city was resilient, thermally comfortable, advocated for social diversity, and allowed economic prosperity (Mansour, 2015). Accordingly, the jurisprudence of urbanism in Islamic-Arabic cities will be identified through the following components:

FIG (2) - Urban tissue of al-Muizz street.
Source: (Authors, 2023)



1. Roads Network
2. Markets and Commercial Areas
3. Grand Mosque (Public Building as heart of the city)
4. Social Endowment (waqf)
5. Mixed Uses

01.
HIERARCHY OF ROADS NETWORK
AND ENVIRONMENTAL ORIENTATION

There's a westernized notion that old city roads are narrow and nonfunctional. However, during that era they satisfied principles of hierarchy and human scale to enhance walkability, liveability, safety and environmental efficiency.

It promoted heavy mobility in main streets with public buildings, commercial activities and amenities, while limiting it to a minimum in secondary streets and cul-de-sac which were designated for residential use, therefore some sites were public, liveable and energetic while others were private, calm and safe.

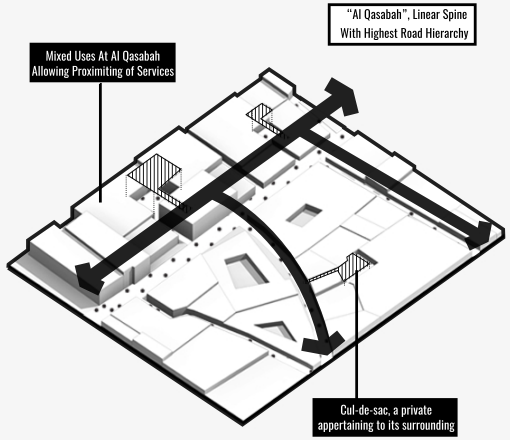


FIG (3) - Hierarchy of roads in old city model
. Source: (Authors, 2023)

02.
FREE & COMPETITIVE MARKET

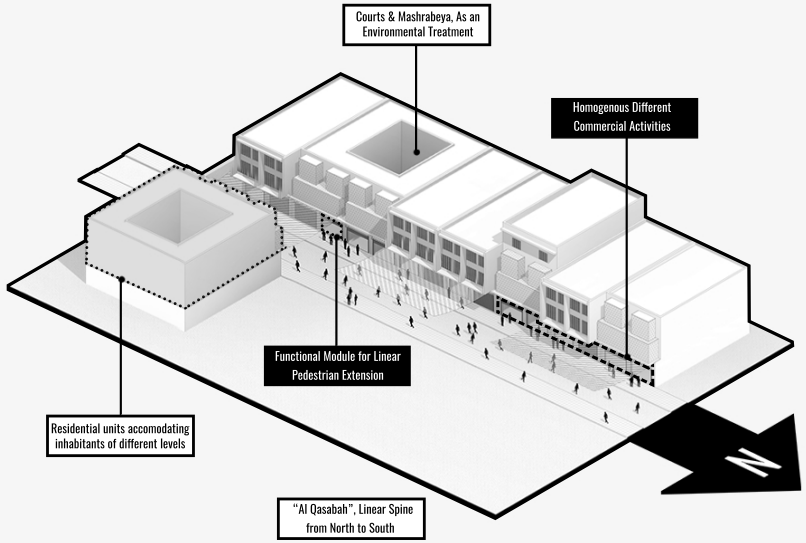


FIG (4) - Markets in old city model. Source: (Authors, 2023)

The marketplaces formed the city spine, referred to as Al-Qasabah, which runs from north to south presenting a variety of industries and economic specialization, which resulted in economic efficiency. It adheres to the notion of "no harm"

03.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

AS THE HEART OF THE CITY

The mosque served as the city's religious, scientific, and social hub, and all other public buildings were built around it. In a more general and inclusive manner, the availability of a platform that played the role of a main spiritual, scientific and social node at the center of the city was considered an important pivotal asset in the city planning and dynamics.

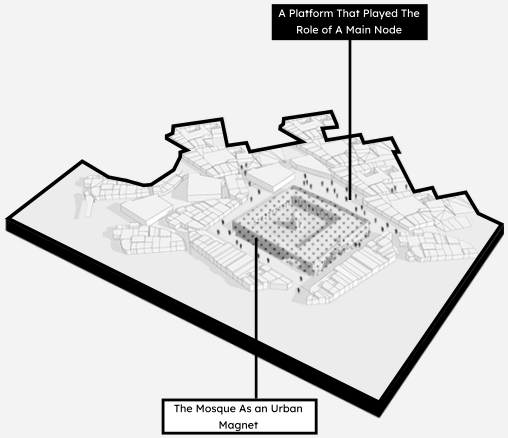
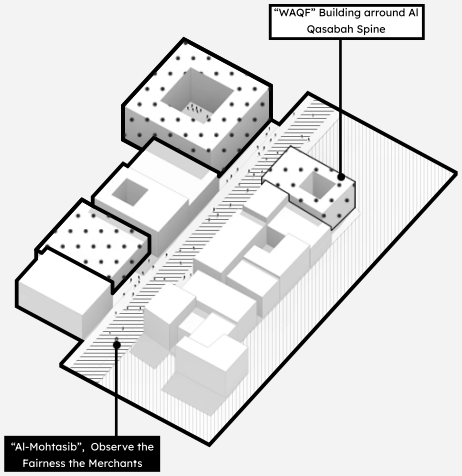


FIG (5) - The Mosque as a public building working as urban magnet.
Source (Authors, 2023)

04.

SOCIAL ENDOWMENT

(WAQF)



Al-Mohtasib is a person who plays an essential role in adjusting changes in the built environment in order to accomplish social justice, equality, and no harm.

The urban management approach in cities is alwaqf (the endowment of property for social purposes), which is similar to NGOs today. It reflects the significance of social responsibility and the provision of services. It was critical in terms of wealth distribution, poverty reduction, and social cohesion.

FIG (6) - Diagram showing social endowment within the city.
Source (Authors, 2023).

05.

MIXED USE CITIES

The proximity of necessary services and the juxtaposition of these activities allowed the city to be liveable.Not to mention, the principle of "causing no harm" was critical in deciding where industries should be located and segregating them from residential areas

THE TRUE BEAUTY OF THE CITY LIES WITHIN ITS AUTHENTICITY

The Southern-Arabic urban fabric incorporates one of the oldest and most successful models of a just city. The mere mimicry of that past model is not what is advocated for in this manifesto, it is rather a call to take a step back and look into our own culture and heritage. Our main drive in the manifesto revolves around the city's real culture and identity. Because how can you be JUST without having the space to be TRUE to yourself? We call for a **JUST CITY** that accommodates the current and futuristic needs of the globalized world while staying true to our essence and character. The old city model ought to be dismantled to unravel the past most influential and successful dynamics. Only then, a truly just contemporary city model can be created.

A JUST CITY RECOGNIZES THE PAST & FLAVORES ITS ESSENCE.

A JUST CITY BUILDS FOR THE FUTURE THROUGH UNRAVELLING THE LAYERS OF THE PAST.

LET'S DECOLONIZE OUR MINDS TO

RENEW OUR IDENTITY

A JUST CITY IS

INCLUSIVE

MORAL

DYNAMIC

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE

RESILIENT

HEALTHY

SOCIALLY COHESIVE

HUMANE

BEAUTIFUL

ATTRACTIVE

SAFE

SCIENTIFIC

COMPETITIVE

SUSTAINBLE

DIVERSE

ETHICAL

SPIRITUAL

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Figure sources

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