

Chapter 6

Urban Transformation and Creativity: Towards Learning Cities in Egypt

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ABSTRACT

Serious investment in education is the best way to achieve sustainable development. It is a lifelong education for all, in justice and equal conditions, that can transform societies towards creativity. This chapter assumes that the spread of the creative cities in Egypt must be preceded by the expansion of the learning cities. And to reach this goal needs to pave the way and overcome many social problems, where Egypt wasn't able to reduce inflation and urban randomness, unable to reduce corruption or to reduce population growth rate, and unable to achieve equal distribution of public services. This chapter will provide the reader with an answer to the question, How can we reach the creative community by expanding the spread of learning cities in the Egyptian governorates? To answer this question, the chapter relies on statistical analysis and focus group interview, and using conflicted rules theory to provide a theoretical perception of sustainable development programs that accommodate and accept learning cities.

INTRODUCTION

Thinking about a shift towards civilized progress based on **creativity**, **justice** and **equality** needs to burn many stages to reach this progressive situation. We assume that achieving this sustainable development strategy must, first of all, pass through the consolidation and spreading of the model of Learning Cities in all governorates of the Egyptian state, in the middle and borders, with the same power. This civilization shift is not an easy process, since history tells that Egyptians can ruminate on any cultural development with high efficiency. Accordingly, we assume that the spread of the **Creative Cities** model in Egyptian society must be preceded by a large development work that spreads and solidifies the **Learning Cities** model. Besides, we opine that achieving this goal needs to pave the way and overcome many social problems.

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It's known that the modern political economy in Egypt has a long history, dating back to the era of Muhammad Ali. He was credited with establishing modern state institutions, and he succeeded in diversifying the Egyptian economy, even though he managed the economy in a monopolistic, quasi-feudal manner. After the era of the *Alawite family*, Egypt had known three stages of political economy: the first started from the 1960s when Egypt adopted the socialist approach to managing its economy while the second started from the mid-seventies where it shifted to economic openness. The third stage yet commenced after signing the GATT at the beginning 1990s at which Egypt completed the process of assimilation into the global economy, with its new liberal orientations.

Unfortunately, Egypt did not benefit from this integration with the global economy, and a significant urban development boom did not occur due to several factors that we will address in this chapter. The list of these factors includes, for example, (i) Egypt's inability to reduce urban inflation and the random spread of residential areas, (ii) the spread of corruption in the bureaucratic institutions of the state, which led to the emergence of an overlap between industrial areas and residential neighborhoods in Egyptian cities, and (iii) the educational infrastructure suffered from continuous weakness due to the population explosion. As a result of these problems – among many others, Egypt witnessed dynamic mobility during the period 2011-2014, which resulted in the removal of two presidents, writing two constitutions, and carrying out two revolutions.

Egypt is now trying to present itself to the world and is trying to discover itself in a different and new way, as it is a developing country, on the basis of inclusiveness and sustainability. With regard to the topic of the book, and this chapter in particular, Egypt has managed over the past three years to make a breakthrough in the demographic characteristics of the Aswan local community - success that resulted in the selection of **Aswan city among the ten best learning cities for 2019 by UNESCO**. Over 3 years, Aswan succeeded in: (1) spreading the culture of learning throughout life, (2) bridging the gender gap in education, (3) facilitating learning processes in the workplace, and (4) enhancing the quality of education and expanding modern learning techniques.

This achievement gives the impression that the Egyptians can overcome the difficulties, but it does not mean that the current policies are sufficient to transfer all Egyptian cities to Learning Cities. There is a long way to go – a way through which important insights and strategies need to be applied. Here the problematic of this chapter is taking shape in an attempt to answer the question: **how can we reach the creative community by expanding the spread of learning cities in the Egyptian governorates?**

On the way towards a creative society, we need first to consolidate and spread the learning community (i.e. learning cities - learning villages), stressing that this strategic path necessarily needs to get rid of social problems, such as illiteracy, dropout from education, population crisis, random distribution of population, corruption, etc. These and other problems are structural obstacles that prevent the natural integration of groups in society, deny them the enjoyment of a normal social life, and reduce their chances of obtaining a high-quality comprehensive education. In total, these problems stand in the way of devoting and spreading learning cities throughout the Egyptian society. Of course, overcoming these problems guarantees the spread of learning cities, and thus guarantees access to the spread of creative cities. Therefore, this chapter aims achieve four goals: -

- Review the literature on learning cities: idea and definition.
- Review some of the distinguished global models of learning cities.
- Examine problems that reduce opportunities for the spread of learning cities.

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