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The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Continuity and Change in the Garbage Village of Muqattam

**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Political Science
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts**

by

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Joint MA in Comparative Middle East Politics and Society

Under the Supervision of Dr. James H. Sunday

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Abbreviations

- SME: small and medium enterprises
- IWB: itinerant waste buyers
- AGCCD: Association of Garbage Collection for Community Development
- SOY: Spirit of Youth for Environment Services
- APE: Association for the Protection of the Environment
- MEA: Ministry of environmental affairs
- MURIS: Ministry of urban renewal and informal settlements
- ERSAP: Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program
- FDI: Foreign Direct Investment
- SCAF: Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
- FJP: Freedom and Justice Party
- EBDA: Egyptian Business Development Association
- MHUUC: Ministry of Housing Utilities and Urban Communities
- PET: Polyethylene terephthalate

Abstract

This dissertation provides an agency-oriented approach to understand adaptability, continuity, and change in the context of challenging structures and struggles, such as privatization, poverty, unemployment, inequality, and marginalization. The premises of open market and neoliberalism imposed from above by the state affected the development of the state-society relations and marginalization. They resulted in a change in the subjectivities of the people and a neglectful rule by the state. As a result, the responsiblized citizen came into existence, meaning that the individualized citizen became actively responsible for his/her own wellbeing, which renders the neoliberal strategies of rule existing in different realms of our everyday life. The *Zabbaleen* community give a clear demonstration of the art of presence despite the marginalization, the neglectful rule, and the policies that they suffer from. Their resilience depended on three main variables: adaptation to neoliberal norms, the grassroot community development, and the unequal power relations within the community. Each of them has its own playing factors. Through these variables, the *Zabbaleen* community showed creativity and collective action to come up with new spaces and opportunities from what is already available to them, protecting themselves, meeting their needs, and struggling for a net result of politics of redress by their individual acts.

Chapter 1

Introduction

My dissertation is a reflection and analysis of a long story of marginalization, exclusion, coping strategies, and resilience that fits into the larger context of the political economy in Egypt. The story is about attempts of adaptation to the neoliberal policies and neglectful rule, of resilience to find spaces to exist and innovate, and of hard work to survive and live properly. The story of development is primarily dependent on the community and their support groups. The story's heroes believe in the power of miracles because of narratives and old stories that they pass from one generation to another about how this community has witnessed a huge turning point because of god's mercy and the church. The story's heroes, despite the odds and inequalities that they have experienced, still have a belief that maybe one day their lives can get better and have a rest from the poor conditions. My story's heroes are the *Zabbaleen* community in the garbage Village in Muqattam.

Research Question

Therefore, my main research question is why the Muqattam garbage village that represents a marginalized community managed to claim agency to economically, politically, and culturally sustain/develop themselves and be resilient despite their struggles?

Research Objectives

- Why the subjectivities of the residents of the informal settlements in general and Muqattam Garbage Village in particular have been re-formed/changed as a result of the state's neoliberal orientation?
- Why the resilience of the residents of the garbage village depends on two variables: adapting to the neoliberal norms and their grassroots movement?

- Why inequalities contributed to the community's resilience and why they do not allow the community to be empowered enough?
- Why the organizational capacity of the village allowed them to collectively defend their business against external threats while failed to address the everyday problems of the community's poorest and the unequal power relations within the community?

Thesis Statement

The Muqattam Garbage village are socially and economically attached to waste disposal; this allowed them to be resilient as a marginalized group in their struggle against the state by adapting to the neoliberal policies and adopting their own interpretation of neoliberal norms, creating their own grassroots community development, and maintaining the unequal power relations.

The Research Variables

The dependent Variable: the resilience of Muqattam Garbage Village

The independent Variables: the community's adaptation and adoption of neoliberal norms and practices, the grassroots community development, and the unequal power relations within the community. I will further elaborate on these variables in the next chapter, the Conceptual Framework.

Methodology

I am conducting a single case study on a specific informal settlement in Egypt, the Muqattam Garbage Village, using qualitative data methods because I am interested in the qualitative nature and the depth of human relations that quantitative methods would be inadequate to explain especially with the informal settlement, and because I am interested in finding meaning by engaging with the Egyptian case rather than finding an objective truth. Therefore, conducting

ethnographic fieldwork using participant observation method in the Garbage Village will help my research because I am interested in writing about people as meaning-makers and in understanding their cultural context that they construct and interact in. So, the answer lies in their everyday practices that reveal how their subjectivities have been affected by the top-down institutionalization of the neoliberal premises and the neglectful rule, how their subjectivities have changed throughout the capitalist development, and why agents who are marginalized on multi-dimensional aspects can be resilient against the capitalist economy and its policies in the mode of global neoliberal governance. I will conduct ethnography on urban marginal politics by studying the routine encounters between people and institutions, which represent the formal politics, the informal discussions, and the lived experiences, which are consequences to formal politics.

Ethnography provides a lens, a place and a voice on a micro-level where a community managed to survive the open-market policies and neoliberalism on the meso-level (national) and macro-level (global) especially when these policies are usually associated with further poverty, marginalization, and inequality. Ethnography helps in connecting the three levels together; it helps me in studying the reactions of the marginalized subjects to these national and global changes, which explains why they became resilient in their struggles. The ethnography will uncover the urban politics of the marginalized poor and their survival strategies and answer questions such as, how the community reproduce their cultural and material meanings and symbols? How they identify themselves? How they perceive the state and its policies? How they reflect on their strengths and weaknesses? How their class structures and their organizational notions have been reworked? How they managed to adopt neoliberal practices as a survival strategy? How they perceive these neoliberal premises, such as aid, tourism, entrepreneurship, sustainability.? How they perceive the religious institutions/figure? How they regard the associations and local

organizations? What kind of effects the grassroots community development has on the residents? How they reproduce certain power relations? How selective mobility unfolds? When do they leave their internal issues and unite? How they (not) have political power? And how they replace the role of the state (in development particularly)? The characteristics and details of the settlement provided by ethnography reveal the boundaries of survival and disadvantages; the strategies and the effects of their agency on the structures not only within the settlement but also on the national level and even the global level.

State-society relations is a complex power relations in our modern social order, “whereby methods of organization and control internal to the social processes they govern create the effect of a state structure external to those processes,”¹ which should be taken as a clue to the dynamics unfolding in the Garbage village between the residents, the non-state actors, and the state. The ethnography will help me to examine the detailed political and socio-economic processes, through which the uncertain yet valuable distinction between state and society is produced. “Disciplinary power, by contrast works not from the outside but from within, not at the level of an entire society but at the level of detail, and not by constraining individuals and their actions but by producing them. A negative, exterior power gives way to an internal, productive power. Disciplines work within local domains and institutions, entering into particular social processes, breaking them down into separate functions, rearranging the parts, increasing their efficiency and precision, and reassembling them into more productive and powerful combinations”.² These processes need to

¹ Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics," *The American Political Science Review* 85, no.1 (1991): 77.

² Mitchell, 93.

be analysed from a historical perspective to understand the state-society novel practices in the modern age and their consequences. Despite the complexity of the state-society relations in this case study, I will try to reveal the institutional mechanisms of the modern socio-economic political order between the state and its formal system on one hand and the Garbage Village and its informal system on the other hand. “The precise specification of space and function that characterize modern institutions, the coordination of these functions into hierarchical arrangements, the organization of supervision and surveillance, and the marking out of time into schedules and programs all contribute to constructing a world that appears to consist not of a complex of social practices but of a binary order: on the one hand individuals and their activities, on the other an inert structure that somehow stands apart from individuals, precedes them, and contains and gives a framework to their lives”.³

I collected primary data through open-ended oral interviews with residents in the Garbage Village. The study involved 10 participants with a random ratio of middle-aged men to women (30-50 years old). The data were collected through one to one interviews and small discussion groups of three or four. I interviewed admins of the relevant NGOs to compare how the people’s perceptions could be different depending on their jobs. In addition, I conducted my own personal observations of the neighborhood and everyday activities. These primary data were supplemented with secondary data from academic literature and documentaries to build up on their arguments and study the historical background, state-citizens relations, role of NGOS, and role of privatization. I analyze the

³ Mitchell, 94.

development of the neoliberal policies under the three main regimes that ruled Egypt and are associated with neoliberal development in Egypt, so I also used government newspapers, private newspapers, officials interviews, and decrees to draw upon the official discourse. My research will be multi-disciplinary to make sure I have a bigger picture and improve the quality of the research and the theoretical framework.

The fields of inquiry for the ethnography and the oral interviews:

1- The interviewee social biography

- Regional/geographic origin
- Occupation
- Household size and composition
- Arrival to the neighborhood
- Economic activity they are involved in
- Their own future plan
- Their expectations and ambitions for the sons'/daughters' future

2- The interviewee experience in the neighborhood

- Education
- Health services
- Internal authority and organizational governance
- Gender norms on distribution of labor
- State interaction/existence
- Perception of other neighborhoods
- The borders of the neighborhood
- Representation in the neighborhood and outside the neighborhood

- Experience with the organizations (NGOs, PVOs, etc.)
- Constraints and opportunities
- Conflict with state
- Conflict with private enterprises
- Identification of internal authority
- Identification of external authority

The dissertation will unfold into seven chapters. The first is the introduction, in which I present the topic, the research question, the research objectives, the thesis statement, the research variables, and the methodology.

Chapter two provides a thorough literature review that cover five main themes: *El-Zabbaleen*, neoliberalism, subject formation and creation of neoliberal subjectivities, marginalization, and grassroots community development. The literature review is then concluded with the conceptual framework that I choose to develop my dissertation, explain the relationships between the research variables, and explain the research questions and the objectives.

Chapter three provides a historical context for the research. It traces the development of political economy in Egypt covering the timeframe from early 1950s till our present time. It explores how the policies of the state, from the welfare state of Nasser, to the Open-Door Policy of Sadat, to the Privatization under Mubarak, and to last but not least the 2011 uprisings, leading to the dynamics that we are witnessing in our present moment, carrying some continuities, but leading to some changes.

Chapter four explains how the subjectivities of the marginalized group, *el-Zabbaleen*, have changed as a result of the state's neoliberal orientation. *El-Zabbaleen* started to adapt to the state's neoliberal orientation by adopting their customized version of the neoliberal norms. In chapter

four, I am covering how *el-Zabbaleen* adopted these social norms, such as: aid, cooperation with international donors, competitiveness, entrepreneurship, capital accumulation, tourism, and sustainability.

Chapter five explains the movement of *el-Zabbaleen's* grassroots community development. I am drawing on people's voices and perception of truth to trace the development of the community. The first phase of the community's development was led by religious internal groups and by the church that the community members constructed themselves. According to my interlocutors, this phase was full of miracles. Then in the second phase, internal associations started to come into picture and assume responsibilities for developing the community further with the help of some support groups from outside the neighborhood. I am providing the Association for the Protection of the Environment as a case study.

Chapter six provides a critique from within the model and the community. It explores the inequalities that exist in the neighborhood, such as the income gap, gender inequalities, and lack of transparency for selective community members. It explores the lines that divide the community and their repercussions. However, these inequalities might still hold some positive implications for the bigger community and the neighborhood's resilience as a whole.

Finally, chapter seven concludes the dissertation, presenting the limitations of the study and providing some recommendations for further consideration and policy implications.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

El-Zabbaleen

Solid waste management in Egypt is managed by two sectors: the formal sector and the informal sector. In this study I am focusing on the informal sector, *el-zabbaleen*. *El-zabbaleen* means garbage collectors in Arabic. In developing countries, thousands and millions of the marginalized poor participate in the informal waste management. They participate in garbage collection, transportation, recycling, valorization, and disposal. These poor urban residents earn their living from the wastes of the urban cities. In Egypt, they live in different settlement on the margins, but the largest is in Muqattam, the garbage village of Muqattam. Residents of the village were initially farmers who came from Upper Egypt in 1930s and 40s.⁴ They were driven by the lack of resources and patronage relationship.⁵ They settled in the western and northern fringes of Cairo metropolitan region and started collecting garbage. Cairenes did not welcome their presence because donkey-pulled carts caused bad smell and crowded streets.⁶ They settled on the periphery of Cairo far enough from the urban areas, yet close enough to collect garbage. Many of them do not have official ownership documents of their homes or lands, so they expected more eviction, and built

⁴ Wael Fahmi and Keith Sutton, "Cairo's Contested Garbage: Sustainable Solid Waste Management and the Zabaleen's Right to the City," *Sustainability* (2010):1765-1783.

⁵ Laila R. Iskandar Kamel, *Mokatam Garbage Village Cairo, Egypt* (Cairo: Stallion Graphics, 1994).

⁶ Kamel, 1994.

basic homes from tin, cardboard, and fallen rocks.⁷ Because of increased migration and high birth rates, by early 1990s the community grew in number (700,000 approximately).⁸ However, they preserved their ties with their villages, carrying their rural lifestyle and living as extended family together.

Zabbaleen initially had no share of the monthly fees paid by households as the *wahiya* retained access and collection rights to garbage, so they collaborated with the *wahiya* who came from the Dakhla Oasis in Egypt's western desert. The *wahiya* served as the middlemen between the *Zabbaleen* and Cairo's households.⁹ Collecting garbage became more than just an occupation; it became a socio-economic profile. They share a common comprehension of kinship and perception of themselves focused on their common destiny of marginalization and oppression.¹⁰

Neoliberalism

David Harvey's conceptualizes Neoliberalism "as a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade."¹¹ While the state must preserve this institutional framework and provide the basic tools for this establishment, state intervention in markets should be very limited to avoid any biases in the markets for the interest groups. David Harvey claims that if

⁷ Kamel, 1994.

⁸ Kamel, 1994.

⁹ Fahmi and Sutton, 2010.

¹⁰ Kamel, 1994.

¹¹ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.

neoliberal doctrine applied consistently, it would end up in a utopia.¹² However, in practice he argues that it has been developed as a set of public policies that rather serve the interest of the dominant group enriching the capital holder, increasing inequality, insecurity, and marginalization, and deteriorating the living standards of the poor and public services.¹³

Other authors would argue differently that neoliberalism is not an evil thing by default; it is just a set of ideas that can be appropriated for our benefit since we cannot reverse the history or de-neoliberalize because it became very complicated. Generally, neoliberalism is premised on the market rationale that markets are better in organizing economic activity because of competition, economic efficiency, and individual choice with minimalist state role. Therefore, policies and programs of welfare state restructuring were conducted based on privatization and deregulation.

The neoliberal revolution globally started with Margret Thatcher in UK and Raegan in US. Their goal was introducing neoliberalism to the system through democratic means, and Harvey draws on the internal dynamics of how it happened in the respective countries.¹⁴ Then Neoliberalism found its way as a global mode of governance.

However, there is a difference between the hegemonic neoliberal political-economic project and the neoliberal techniques. Therefore, inspired by Wendy Larner, I would classify neoliberalism as

¹² James Ferguson, 2009. "The Uses of Neoliberalism," *Antipode* 41, no.1 (2009): 170.

¹³ Ferguson, 2009, 170.

¹⁴ Harvey, 2007.

three separate interlinked divisions: Neoliberalism as a policy framework, as an ideology, and as a mode of governmentality.¹⁵

For my dissertation, I will be focusing on neoliberalism as policy, which is a policy framework that tackles the shift from Keynesian welfare state to the political agenda of markets operations and globalization of capital. Globalization was constructed “as an unstoppable economically driven process that could only be accompanied by a policy framework based on market economics and more specifically privatization, liberalization, and deregulation.”¹⁶ Neoliberalism rests upon five norms: “the individual, freedom of choice, market security, laissez faire, and minimal government.”¹⁷ However, it had to be legitimized through ideological framework.

Subject Formation and Creation of Neoliberal Subjectivities

Janine Brodie states that "changing public expectations about citizenship entitlements, the collective provision of social needs, and the efficacy of the welfare state has been a critical victory for neo-liberalism."¹⁸ So how do we account for its success in forming new subjectivities? The answer lies in how neoliberalism as ideology was framed and legitimized. It is a more

¹⁵ Wendy Larner, 2000. "Neo-liberalism Policy, Ideology, Governmentality." *Studies in Political Economy* 63, no.1 (2000): 5-25.

¹⁶ Laura Guazzone and Daniela Pioppi, *The Arab State and Neo-Liberal Globalization* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2009), 4.

¹⁷ Larner, "Neo-liberalism Policy, Ideology, Governmentality," 7.

¹⁸ Janine Brodie, "Restructuring and the New Citizenship" In *Rethinking Restructuring: Gender and Change in Canada*, by I. Bakker, 131(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 131.

"sociological" approach to neo-liberalism in which a wider range of institutions, organizations and processes are considered.¹⁹ Neoliberal discourse resonated with people in different social positions and from different backgrounds forming "subject positions," which is one of the biggest successes of neoliberalism. This renders neoliberalism not as merely set of ideas or as only imposed by the state; rather it became hegemon because of a long process of contestation. Neoliberalism would fit Gramsci's definition of hegemonic ideology as "distorted communications motivated by unequal power relations."²⁰

Therefore, it is important to highlight that "disciplinary neoliberalism is not totalizing and cannot succeed without the participation of local actors who perceive the neoliberal model as conducive to securing their broader interests."²¹ Comaroff argues that "the capillaries of neoliberal governance' have become 'so firmly entrenched in the cartography of our everyday lives' to the point where 'ideologically founded politics appear dead', and government has become 'increasingly reduced to an exercise in the technical management of capital.'²² Neoliberalism ensures that any social practices, values, and institutions against the financialization and free-market are abolished and substituted with new subjectivities. These new social structures and

¹⁹ Larner, "Neo-liberalism Policy, Ideology, Governmentality," 9.

²⁰ Jim McQuigan, 2016. *Neoliberal Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

²¹ Angela Joya, 2017. "Neoliberalism, the State and Economic Policy Outcomes in the Post-Arab Uprisings: The Case of Egypt," *Mediterranean Politics* 22, no. (2017): 341.

²² J. Comaroff, "The end of neoliberalism? What is left of the left." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 637, no.1 (2011): 146.

institutions are adopted by the state and then they get normalized with different strategies for the people until citizens on the grassroots level become neoliberal subjects helping in the reproduction of neoliberalism and its resilience.

Some other scholars tried to trace the neoliberal implications through novels, such as Nicky Marsh's work on William Gaddis' 1975 novel *JR*. Mark Hayward also proposed a new dimension of neoliberal cultural development, which is the development of "a techno-social regime of neoliberal optics" or in other words the development of electro-technological innovation.²³ "Mark Zuckerberg" and "Apple myth" are framed as net results of the neoliberal discourse of self-justification, new technologies, and urban subculture.²⁴ On a different topic, Stephen Maddison and Angela McRobbie worked on the commodification of sexuality that is a striking characteristic of neoliberal culture. Raymond Williams' cultural materialism explains how the social and cultural activity became reduced to the market and commodification, the neoliberal orientation.²⁵ And Mark Fisher concludes in *Capitalist Realism* that the neoliberal norms became unchallenged in the social and political practices²⁶. These neoliberal norms became structures in which new hegemonic practices become common sense with limited space for emancipation.²⁷ However, Jane Jenson slightly disagreed on this point that the political discourse that results in these hegemonic practices

²³ As cited in Jeremy Gilbert, "Neoliberal Culture," *Journal of Culture, Theory, and Politics* 80, no. 81 (2013): 5-6.

²⁴ Mcquigan, *Neoliberal Culture*.

²⁵ As cited in Mcquigan, *Neoliberal Culture*.

²⁶ As cited in Gilbert, "Neoliberal Culture."

²⁷ Mcquigan, *Neoliberal Culture*.

is not only dominated by the hegemonic elites; rather there is political agency that influence the process of restructuring and representation.²⁸

According to McQuigan, culture is “interpreted not as a means of critical thinking or democratic self-determination but is envisaged as an abstract field of knowledge economy, a tool in shaping new styles of life and instrument of innovations and the creation of gross value added.”²⁹ And this is how the neoliberal culture resonated with people. Paul Gilroy explores how neoliberal discourse and culture appealed to people by promising better lives with the entrepreneurial self-help for the deprived. Jo Littler complemented that the neoliberal government also legitimized neoliberalism based on meritocracy, claiming to give everyone equal chance for social mobility and inclusion in the elite class.³⁰ And this discourse stood strong and was over-emphasized especially at crisis times, such as in 2008 financial crisis as Neal Curtis explained based upon Heidegger’s framework (Nature of Dasein) about the importance of maintaining the coherence of the subject’s world, especially when being challenged by disproving and shaking events and reality.³¹ With the financial crisis in 2008, the Neo-Marxian critiques against neoliberalism gained much popularity

²⁸ Larner, "Neo-liberalism Policy, Ideology, Governmentality”.

²⁹ As quoted in Skaidra Trilupaityte, 2017. "Neoliberal culture." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 23, no.3 (2017): 394. doi:10.1080/10286632.2016.1248955.

³⁰ Jo Littler, "Meritocracy as Plutocracy: The Marketising of Equality under Neoliberalism," *New Formations* 80, no.80 (2013): 52-72.

³¹ Gilbert, "Neoliberal Culture."

against the dishonest global players and the increase in inequality, poverty, exclusion, and marginalization.

When neoliberalism changed economies, it also changed human relations. The neoliberal discourse does not lead us to thinking about health and safety conditions of dispirited and deprived workers of the Third World. For example, sustainable development is used to serve the neoliberal ideals, conceiving the deprived as clients who are used by corporation to accumulate capital and profit rather than actors with rights and duties³².

In Egypt when “millions marched against rising levels of poverty, inequality and the corruption associated with decades of neoliberal globalization and authoritarianism,³³” Kaboub uncovers the neoliberal roots of economic inequality and socio-economic exclusion and marginalization that have led to the uprisings.³⁴ They suffered from deindustrialization, sale of state assets to foreign enterprises, and unemployment that resulted in a sense of re-colonization through neoliberalism. And their slogans of “Bread, freedom, and social justice” reveal that “the implications of the functioning of the economy as it has been reconstructed particularly in the west since the late

³² Kathleen Tierney, 2015. "Resilience and the Neoliberal Project: Discourses, Critiques, Practices—And Katrina," *American Behavioral Scientist* 59, no. 10 (2015): 1327-1342.

³³ Joya, "Neoliberalism, the State and Economic Policy Outcomes in the Post-Arab Uprisings: The Case of Egypt".

³⁴ Fadhel Kaboub, "The End of Neoliberalism? An Institutional Analysis of the Arab Uprisings," *Journal of Economic Issues* 47, no. 2 (2013): 533-543.

1970s, are not part of the solution, as many mainstream commentators still suggest, but rather a part of the problem.”³⁵

There is no one neoliberalism because of its different interpretations, so it is applied differently from one state to another and from one field into another. When neoliberalism was imported into Egypt, neoliberalism created a new life here with different process and political possibilities because of the different context. Theoretically market relations shift the power from the government to private capital to enhance opportunities and accumulation. But provided with the same context, neoliberalism could even be perceived or interpreted differently. For example, it could be interpreted as replacing the government with the market to deliver social services, or as empowering “rural women” to address their own needs as Fergusson highlighted.³⁶

Unlike in the 20th century social democracies, in Egypt the number of the workers in the informal sector is increasing. The number of the formal wage workers constitutes a small percentage in relation to the majority of the population who are working in the informal sector. This phenomenon is not limited to Egypt, but to the developing countries generally. So, when neoliberalism as a mode of governance took place, social assistance became a critical question especially when the kind of worker has changed. This led to the rise of transnational forms of governance through the international organizations and the increasing importance of NGOs, replacing the social dimension

³⁵ Roberto Roccu, "David Harvey in Tahrir Square: the dispossessed, the discontented and the Egyptian revolution," *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2013): 423-440.

³⁶ Nils Gilman and Miriam Ticktin, "From Antipolitics to Post-Neoliberalism: A Conversation with James Ferguson," *Humanity* 5, no.2 (2014): 247-259.

of the social welfare state.³⁷ As a result, ‘responsible citizens’ and communities became involved in the production and reproduction of this mode that is not based on direct state intervention.

This mode resulted in changes in the cultural assumptions, which gave rise to a new understanding of the responsible citizens as entrepreneurial, enterprising, innovative, and (importantly) political subjects. “The responsabilized citizen comes to operate as a miniature firm, responding to incentives, rationally assessing risks, and prudently choosing from among different courses of action.”³⁸ The main idea is that individualized citizen is actively responsible for their own wellbeing, which renders the neoliberal strategies of rule existing in different realms of our everyday life. “Neo-liberalism, like the welfare state, is more an ethos or an ethical ideal, than a set of completed or established institutions... The transformation of a polity involves the complex linking of various domains of practice, is ongoingly contested, and the result is not a foregone conclusion. Consequently, contemporary forms of rule are inevitably composite, plural and multi-form.”³⁹

By acknowledging the contradiction and the complexity of neoliberalism, we can better identify potential for achieving social justice within this deeply rooted neoliberal context. As David Harvey pointed out that to mobilize society for a radical change, we must understand the society’s needs and how their subjectivities are dominated by the neoliberal ideology and culture.

Marginalization

Marginalization is “the process by which individuals, social groups, and even

³⁷ Ferguson, "The Uses of Neoliberalism".

³⁸ Ferguson, "The Uses of Neoliberalism", 172.

³⁹ Larner, "Neo-liberalism Policy, Ideology, Governmentality,"19.

ideas are made peripheral to the mainstream by relegating or confining them to the outer edges of margins of society.”⁴⁰ Residents of the Garbage Village are marginalized geographically and socially because they live on the edge of Cairo in informal settlement and belong to the Christian minority of Egypt, even though the settlement itself is composed of Christian majority. Economically they are marginalized because they are poor and politically they are marginalized because the government did not recognize them or include them in its policy-making process. Marginality is generally depicted as a negative term, and that marginalization is “a direct and important dimension of capitalist development.”⁴¹ There is a dominant academic viewpoint that incorporating the marginalized will not reduce marginality, but rather reproduce it, and that the marginalized are usually positioned in the state of powerlessness.⁴² However, as Asef Bayat explains, marginality can sometimes serve as an opportunity for those who cannot afford the mainstream, providing alternative social arrangements with a counter-power of resilience.⁴³ Therefore, although the residents of the garbage village are rather marginalized “meaning that they are economically exploited, politically repressed, socially stigmatized and culturally excluded from a closed social system,”⁴⁴ they did not give up their efforts to survive. Reem Saad also agrees

⁴⁰ Zina O’Leary, *The Social Science Jargon Buster* (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 153.

⁴¹ Ray Bush and Habib Ayeb, *Marginality and Exclusion in Egypt* (London: Zed Books, 2012).

⁴² Bush and Ayeb, *Marginality and Exclusion in Egypt*.

⁴³ Asef Bayat, "Marginality: Curse or Cure?" In *Marginality and Exclusion in Egypt*, by Ray Bush and Habib Ayeb (London: Zed Books, 2012):14-27.

⁴⁴ Bayat, "Marginality: Curse or Cure?,"14-27.

with Asef Bayat that marginality could be enabling in a way.⁴⁵ Because the individual is already free from societal control, they can pioneer into creative practices, proposing a frontier rather than a periphery.⁴⁶ Although the state policies have been negatively affecting this community since their first day in Muqattam and even before their relocation into Muqattam, the community managed to survive and be resilient against the challenges of privatization, poverty, unemployment, inequality, and marginalization.

Grassroot Community Development

Community development is becoming a critical issue in the neoliberal moment to attract investors and foreign direct investments. Therefore, the governments of the developing countries are pressured to initiate projects of community development. However, as some researches show these projects by the governments are perceived negatively. They suspect the aims and the objectives of these community development projects that they do not target their needs and their well-being, rather the government's self-gain.⁴⁷ Therefore, grassroot movements of community development started to take place to consider the subjective tangible and non-tangible needs of the communities. Grassroot community development movements are bottom-up development process to address their deficiencies and barriers against empowerment and sustainable positive changes, shaping

⁴⁵ Reem Saad, "Margins and Frontiers," In *Marginality and Exclusion in Egypt*, by Ray Bush and Habib Ayeub (London: Zed Books, 2012), 97-111.

⁴⁶ Saad, "Margins and Frontiers," 97-111.

⁴⁷ Doreen Kobani, "Grassroots Perception and Participation in Community Development," *Developing Country Studies* 4, no. 16 (2014): 38- 44.

better lives in line with the community's culture, values, norms, and aspirations. In addition, with providing them with tangible items of goods and things, grassroots community development movements work on the development of man and capacity building, revealing people's creative potential to allow them to improve their lives with the available means and tools. They try to enhance the personalities of the community to achieve the desired socio-economic transformation of the communities.

In the literature there is a big debate over the Neoliberal orientation and neoliberal culture globally with a clear negative bias against the consequences of neoliberalism with limited attention to the grassroots movements that tried to creatively adopt the resulting structures as a mechanism of survival and resilience. Also, most studies tend to analyze the aggregate economy of Egypt with little attention to micro individual cases. The literature on Egypt studies Neoliberal policies as economic policies and their socio-economic implications for Egypt measuring poverty, inequality, unemployment, etc. Moreover, the analysis on the micro-level of communities in Egypt tend to be few and very economic as well while the literature on the role of religious institutions tends to focus on the Islamic charity organizations primarily. Therefore, I am intending to study the social and cultural dynamics that shape a specific margin, which is represented by the garbage village in Muqattam, as a lens to study how some segment of the marginalized citizens managed to claim agency in the process of cultural, political, and economic change by adapting to the neoliberal structures and adopting some neoliberal norms to sustain their existence, such as cooperation with international financial institutions and local NGOs, capital accumulation, aid, entrepreneurship, tourism, minimal governmental intervention, and sustainability. I am also drawing attention to the role of Christian organizations in Muqattam.

Conceptual Framework

I will develop my dissertation to answer my main question by raising and answering three other sub-questions. In the third chapter, I will explain why the relocation of welfare and the state's economic withdrawal led to an increase in the informal settlements and marginalization. "Neoliberalism, like globalization, is not a single process or set of reforms that creates predictable and replicable effects across diverse locales, nor does it entail a simple "retreat of the state" from spheres of economic activity".⁴⁸ As a result, I will attempt to explain why the subjectivities of the residents of the marginalized in general and Muqattam Garbage Village in particular have been reformed/changed as a result of the state's neoliberal orientation. In the fourth and fifth chapter, I will explain why the resilience of the residents of the garbage village depends on two variables: adapting to the neoliberal norms and their grassroot movement. Adaptation to neoliberal norms includes their efforts to internally promote cooperation with international financial institutions and local NGOs, capital accumulation, aid, entrepreneurship, tourism, minimal governmental intervention, and sustainability. On the other hand, their grassroot movement includes the creations of community associations, the activities of the church, and the role of support groups that are a community-based movement of the village for resilience and survival. Residents of the village in Muqattam represent, inspired by Jillian Schwedler, "the aspiring cosmopolitans" who are continuously trying to cope with marginalization and exclusion and create new opportunities for

⁴⁸ Jillian Schwedler, "Amman Cosmopolitan: Spaces and Practices of Aspiration and Consumption," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30, no. 3 (2010): 558.

themselves instead of remaining on the losing side of neoliberal promises⁴⁹ because while neoliberal policies can create exclusion and marginalization, subjects can adopt these already formed-structures to create spaces for inventiveness. The sixth chapter will be dedicated to the third dependent variable, the unequal power relations. Questions that will be answered include: Why they contributed to the community's resilience and why they do not allow the community to be empowered enough? Why the organizational capacity of the village allowed them to collectively defend their business against external threats while failed to address the everyday problems of the community's poorest and the unequal power relations within the community?

Therefore, I will be visiting the literature on five main domains: *Zabbaleen* communities, marginalization, consequences of neoliberal policies, Subject (re)formation and agency of marginalized communities, and grassroots development movements. I choose the Garbage Village in Muqattam as my case study because although there are many marginalized communities and informal settlements in Egypt, only a few who managed to adapt to the regime's neoliberal policies, work within the economic structures, and enhance or at least sustain their living despite their continuous struggle with the state. Therefore, I decided to focus on a specific marginalized community representing a society that showed resilience against the regimes' neglectful rule and neoliberal policies by adopting neoliberal practices, creating their own sustainable grassroots development model, and internally preserving their power relations. One more reason for why I chose the garbage village is because it is the largest *Zabbaleen* community, and I have some preliminary knowledge of it; I have visited it before.

⁴⁹ Schwedler, 547-562.

Chapter 3

Historical Context

The Development of the Political Economy in Egypt

We can never properly understand the resilience of *Zabbaleen* without properly contextualizing the development of the political economy in Egypt and its effect on state-society relations. However, it is very important to understand the premises of open market and neoliberalism that affected the development of the state-society relations and marginalization towards the urban poor including *Zabbaleen*. Therefore, a chapter was needed to explain how the economic policies and state orientation resulted in a change in the subjectivities of the people and a neglectful rule by the state.

The Welfare State of Nasser

The Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser (1952-1970) managed to introduce a socialist model for the Egyptian state, constitutionalizing central state control over economy. After getting rid of the monarchial control, Nasser's goal to make Egypt a strong and independent state rested upon his control over the urban spaces. Therefore, during his rule, a massive wave of urbanization, industrialization, modernization, and top-down developmentalism took place.⁵⁰ Under his rule, the social contract between the ruler and the ruled boiled down to provision of welfare in return for authoritarianism and strong state control. The welfare rationality is not new to Egypt; in fact, it is

⁵⁰ Caroline Abadeer, "Informality, NGOs, and Cairo's Trash Collectors: Economic and Social Welfare Policy in the Authoritarian Egyptian State" (MA diss., University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, 2011),14.

traced back to the constitution of Egypt in the late 19th century.⁵¹ Welfare and services provision included guaranteed employment in the public sector, free education, compulsory primary education, literacy programs, free medical services, subsidized food products, maximum working hours, mandatory benefit payments, job security, among others. In return, properties and knowledge were nationalized. This state-society relation created a rent-seeking/bureaucratic elite who monopolized interest representation and maintained the continuity of the regime.⁵²

Despite his decisions to strengthen the public sector, at the early years of his rule Nasser supported the private sector and encouraged foreign investment. Furthermore, in 1952 the permanent Council for the Development of National Production was created to assess the private industrial projects and consult the entrepreneurs.⁵³ As for the joint ventures between the Egyptian and foreign enterprises, Law 120 of 1952 was released to encourage them, abolishing the rule that dictates that 51 % of the industrial enterprises should be Egyptian ownership.⁵⁴

Moreover, Law 156 of 1953 allowed the foreign businesses to obtain up to 10% annual profits of the capital invested during the first six years and later up to 20%. They also allowed new foreign

⁵¹ Salwa Ismail, *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 68.

⁵² Abadeer, 14-16.

⁵³ Nadia Farah, *Egypt's Political Economy* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2009), 32.

⁵⁴ Farah, 33.

enterprises to own 100% of their shares according to article 2 of Law 26 of 1954.⁵⁵ And if a project/enterprise failed, foreign investors can re-export their capital after one year of its open operation. However, Egyptian and foreign investors were reluctant to participate in any investment because they were excluded from the political arena without any representatives or support group to protect their interests. After land reforms laws of 1952, the investors feared the government's intention of nationalizing.

The absence of private and foreign investors in the Egyptian economy led to what the investors feared, and the state adopted more decisions of nationalization in 1956. By 1960, the public sector grew massively.⁵⁶ Therefore, the private sector was the instrument of its own demise under Nasser.

When the Egyptian -Syrian Union was created in 1961, the socialist laws of 1960 were met with reluctance in Syria by the Syrian industrial commercial military elites, so Nasser feared this would happen in Egypt and nationalized the majority of non-agricultural assets. In 1965, the state owned 90% of public non-agricultural domestic output.⁵⁷

He strengthened the public sector on the expense of the private sector. His social welfare programs benefited the Egyptians in terms of enhancing their living standards. "The percentage of poor families decreased from 35 percent in 1958–59 to 27 percent in 1964–65 for rural families, and from 30 percent to 27.8 percent for urban families. The share of wages in total income increased from 38 percent in 1950 to 50 percent in 1967–68."⁵⁸ The minimum wages and the labor laws

⁵⁵ Farah, 33.

⁵⁶ Farah, 33.

⁵⁷ Farah, 35.

⁵⁸ Farah, 36.

protected their rights and enhanced their living, reducing inequalities in the society. Therefore, Nasser's welfare programs resonated with people because they directly served their interests and needs.

On the other hand, economic growth fell to 3.3% because of import substitution policy, income redistribution policies, welfare policies, and financial burdens while savings, investment, and exports were low without the help of FDI. In addition, the bureaucratic elites were the reason behind increasing corruption. They used their positions to accumulate personal profit, receive bribery, act as subcontractors in the Black Market, and make monopolies of trade.⁵⁹

In terms of housing supply, the policies had more complicated results. Under Nasser, housing supply was primarily controlled by the public sector. Because of the policies issued, residents of the rented properties enjoyed more rights than the owners of the properties, so the housing market shifted from rental housing to owner-occupied housing.⁶⁰ Many low and middle-class families could not afford ownership, so they were pushed to informal housing. Moreover, with the turn of industrialization, a massive wave of urban migration took place in search of better job opportunities. Many of these migrants could not find affordable housing except in the informal settlements.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Farah, 36-37.

⁶⁰ Marwa A. Khalifa, "Evolution of Informal Settlements Upgrading Strategies in Egypt: From negligence to participatory development." *Ain Shams Engineering Journal*, 6 (2015), 1152, doi:10.1016/j.asej.2015.04.008.

⁶¹ Khalifa, 1152.

Under Nasser, there was no waste management system; rather a few laws that regulate garbage collection. Law 140 of 1957 prohibits the blockage of public roads.⁶² Law 38 of 1967 that was later amended by law 4 of 1994 under Mubarak states that governorates are in charge of garbage collection and disposal, and they are responsible for giving licenses to garbage collectors. It regulates the process by enforcing the residents to pay 2% of the household rental value to set their garbage for collection while waste collectors need to have licenses, and any law violation will cost a penalty of EGP 100.⁶³ ⁶⁴ Decree 134 of 1968 made the Ministry of Housing responsible for public cleaning while Law 84 of 1968 was issued to prohibit disposal of waste in public streets.⁶⁵

By the end of Nasser's rule, Egypt's resources were already depleted because of Egypt's wars with Israel and intervention in Yemeni civil war.⁶⁶ Therefore, from 1967 to 1973, the government stopped investing in housing construction, which further contributed to the movement into informal housing.

⁶² CID, *The Informal Sector in Waste Recycling in Egypt* (CID Consulting, 2008), 36.

⁶³ CID, 36.

⁶⁴ Laila Iskandar, Berti Shaker, and Rami El-Sherbiny, *Economic Aspects of Informal Sector Activities Solid Waste Management* (Cairo: CID Consulting, 2010), 28.

⁶⁵ CID, 36.

⁶⁶ Nicole A Eisenschenk, "Exploring issues of relative deprivation in the Zabaleen community in Cairo" (MA diss., University of Malta, 2015), 27,

<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar//handle/123456789/8163>.

The Open-Door Policy of Sadat

After Nasser's death, a different chapter was written in the Egyptian history by Mohamed Anwar el Sadat (1971-1981). In terms of the housing sector, Sadat maintained Nasser's policy of rent with minor modifications,⁶⁷ but in terms of the other policies, Sadat adopted a different set of programs and policies than what his predecessor did. After 1973 war and even earlier, there was a need for economic recovery in a new way after the socialist state policy has exhausted the state's resources. Therefore, Sadat introduced the Open-Door Policy (Infitah) that made the public sector less engaged. Sadat's efforts to liberalize the economy into a free market model were to attract foreign investments and integrate into the global market. These policies paved the way for neoliberalism under the following presidency. Bread subsidies were removed in 1977, which indicates the start of neoliberal shift.⁶⁸ He froze health spending and public sector hiring, privatized schools, informalized labor, and excluded many poor from social security.⁶⁹

Law 65 of 1971, Law 43 of 1974, and its amendment of Law No. 32 of 1977 on the foreign investment were a manifestation of Sadat's intention of liberalization.^{70 71} Sadat established free zones with special incentives such as exemption of taxes for five years. The public sector began to lose its power while the private sector was reinforced. Privatization programs were encouraged by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). This combination of programs and

⁶⁷ Khalifa, 1153.

⁶⁸ Ismail, 71.

⁶⁹ Ismail, 71.

⁷⁰ Eisenschenk, 28.

⁷¹ Farah, 38.

policies managed to attract foreign investors who found opportunities to accumulate capital and profit.

These capitalist policies aligned Sadat with the West; this alignment was further strengthened after Camp David Accord. As a result, his relations with the Arab World deteriorated, so to pacify them, he decided to include Islamists (mainly Muslim Brotherhood that was suppressed during the previous regime and was later banned under Sisi) in the public sphere. Therefore, an increase in the number of the Islamic banks and the investment companies was witnessed.⁷² Moreover, Sadat paid special attention to the development of tourism sector.

However, his economic policies harmed the local investors, disturbed the class system, and drastically increased imports, which allowed for uncontrolled capitalism, inflation, and corruption.⁷³ Moreover, “From 1974 to 1982, total investments committed under Law 43 of 1974 did not exceed LE5 billion.”⁷⁴ During 1975-85, Egypt witnessed increase in GDP but mainly because of rent and unproductive income (oil, remittances, tourism, and Suez Canal). Private entrepreneurs used cheap credit, transferring part of the credit to their accounts abroad, which were non-productive activities. “The share of manufacturing in total investments by both the private and the public sector dropped from 40 percent in 1967–73 to just 19 percent in 1981–91.”⁷⁵

⁷² Eisenschenk, 29.

⁷³ Eisenschenk, 30.

⁷⁴ Farah, 39.

⁷⁵ Farah, 40.

The neoliberal shift was not rapid because of the public opposition against the roll-back of the socialist state.⁷⁶ Therefore, Sadat had to provide the public with an alternative for state's welfare provision. Law 30 of 1977 was issued to organize social assistance and welfare for the divorced women and their children, orphan children, elderly people, among others.⁷⁷ Assistance helped some to continue education and improve their work. In fact, Sadat and Mubarak extended pension plans for physically-disabled people and over 65- years old people.⁷⁸ However, these laws are gendered and reinforces gender hierarchy, in which men are the guardians and their absence dictates women eligibility for social security. Moreover, application for social assistance has not been easy. Administrators tend to interpret the rules according to their prejudices and biases.⁷⁹ Many dropped their applications for social assistance because of humiliation.

New approach was needed to provide welfare for the people in need. And the first new approach was charity networks and donations that constructed the deserving poor as subjects of charity.⁸⁰ Charity networks used material indices as evidence of need. However, the receiver must represent himself/herself as moral subjects worthy of assistance conforming to the accepted subjectivities by secular and religious discourse. Sometimes there was a link between Islamic charity

⁷⁶ Abadeer, 17.

⁷⁷ Ismail, 69.

⁷⁸ Ismail, 69.

⁷⁹ Ismail, 70.

⁸⁰ Ismail, 74.

organizations and political activism.⁸¹ Recourse to charity was propagated by media.⁸² Famous newspapers started campaigns in 1970s to collect charitable donations and funds to meet the urgent needs.⁸³

Sense of social responsibility and Takafol el-ijtimai'(social sponsorship/solidarity) were developed. New entrepreneurs found in philanthropy a way for enhancing their public image, so they used charity as manifested in the Islamic tradition (Zakat, a social annual payment on capital mandated by shari'a) and the western discourse of modernity (civil society sponsorship).⁸⁴ The drawbacks of charity are first it is not sustainable; it only assists but not eradicates poverty. Second, basic needs of the poor turn into gifts from the better-off sectors feeding into clientelist relationship while these are citizenship rights. Charity dwindles equality of citizenship rights and opportunities.

The second adopted approach was making the poor responsible for their poverty, 'responsibilized citizen,' because of their personal faults, not working hard, or having many children.⁸⁵ And sometimes poverty was linked to criminality in presidential speeches. Micro-credit programs were created to allow the poor to respond to opportunities with more liquidity in the informal sector and establishing their micro-enterprises for poverty relief and financial independence.⁸⁶ The

⁸¹ Ismail, 75.

⁸² Ismail, 78.

⁸³ Ismail, 80.

⁸⁴ Ismail, 82.

⁸⁵ Ismail, 94.

⁸⁶ Ismail, 87-88.

entrepreneurial subject became the ideal citizen as part of the trans-national governmentality of neoliberal enterprise.

Egypt still did not have a waste management system under Sadat. Therefore, with the absence of waste management system, poor neighborhoods and informal settlements used to throw their garbage into irrigation canals, causing flowing garbage heaps or their sinking. The authorities had to resolve such issues, so they cleared what they could of the canals with heavy equipment, and the rest that could no longer be used were filled and prepared as streets.⁸⁷ The poor settlements were marginally integrated as consumers, so they were not seen as major problem to the authorities back then.

Privatization under Mubarak

When Mubarak came into power (1981-2011), he continued with Sadat's Infitah policies but with some social aspect. The Egyptian economy was in crisis with an external debt of \$US49 billion and a high budget deficit. The 1991 gulf war resulted in limited remittances, tourism, and foreign exchange.⁸⁸ The state was directed to borrowing from the lending institutions. Advised by the IMF and the World Bank, he introduced social policies that changed the social relations in rural areas, moving into a more expert-oriented production system. He liberalized land tenure, investment, and labor laws.⁸⁹ Peasants could not afford the liberalization of the agricultural sector and migrated

⁸⁷ Petra Kuppinger, "Crushed? Cairo's Garbage Collectors And Neoliberal Urban Politics."

Journal of Urban Affairs 36, no.2 (2014), 625. doi:10.1111/juaf.12073.

⁸⁸ Farah, 40-41.

⁸⁹ Joya, "Neoliberalism, the State and Economic Policy Outcomes in the Post-Arab Uprisings:

The Case of Egypt," 334

into the urban informal sector.⁹⁰ Mubarak's policies of promoting privatization, liberalization, and investment, which were encouraged by the IMF ERSAP in 1991, crystalized neoliberalism in Egypt, and succeeded in changing the social relations. Wealth was moving from the public sector to the private sector, ending up with crony capitalism. After the signing of 1994 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the controlled prices of wheat, cotton, and rice and the tariffs on imported goods were lifted and reduced respectively.⁹¹ Additionally, IMF has been appraising neoliberal free market policies in Egypt.⁹² Ahmed Nazif cabinet was composed of a neoliberal team. They passed law 91 of 2005 to cut personal and corporate taxes by 50% and impose a new flat tax rate of 20%. They also reduced tariffs to 9%.⁹³ The regressive tax burden fell on low incomes rather than on high incomes.⁹⁴ "The program under the Nazif government, while accelerating the process of privatization, is in essence subsidizing the private sector at the expense of the nation as a whole. The executive board of the IMF was more than pleased with the so-called reforms undertaken by the Nazif cabinet."⁹⁵ The government ruled in corporatist style of political government.

⁹⁰ Henry Veltmeyer, "Unrest and Change: Dispatches from the Frontline of a Class War in Egypt." *Globalizations* 8, no. 5 (2011): 612

⁹¹ Veltmeyer, 612.

⁹² Joya, 344.

⁹³ Farah, 49.

⁹⁴ Farah, 49.

⁹⁵ Farah, 50.

Generally, state withdrawal and liberalization have positive impact on the economy because it allows for private sector to grow after state's authority has been limited. In Egypt, they had the opposite effect, leading to escalated state's authority. Private sector growth should have benefited the entire population by creating jobs and reflecting on the entire economy. However, in reality, inequality and poverty increased, and informal settlements/slums proliferated as a net result. Price deregulation and flexible exchange rates increased inflation. Liberalization resulted in scarce resources exploited by the elites resulting in exclusion and irrationality. Corruption increased; officials depended on financial support from private sector deals, rather than tax revenues generated from citizens. The government witnessed limited accountability because they used to overpower opposition with no appeal to the mass. There was no influence on state policy to improve the lives of urban poor.

Because of the informal settlements, the surrounding lands lost much of its market value. The government and the investors wanted to optimize their profit by clearing these settlements, so they can generate the highest price for the land and use it for further investments.⁹⁶ In 1993, a rock fell from the Muqattam mountain and killed 40 persons who were living in informal settlements. This incident was used to relocate many of the residents in the informal settlements, especially in Dewi'a. However, many of the *Zabbaleen* associations and support groups intervened on their behalf and stopped the relocation of some settlements that were far from the dangerous areas with no imminent threat to their lives.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Wael Salah Fahmi, "The impact of privatization of solid waste management on the Zabaleen garbage collectors of Cairo." *Environment & Urbanization* 17, no.2 (2005): 170.

⁹⁷ Fahmi, 160.

While the state attempted to upgrade Cairo and Giza to be the future globalized business class cities, the marginalized groups and poor did not find place in these upscale urban spaces, so they were deserted and pushed outside.⁹⁸ In 1990s, the private sector bought many of the government-owned deserts, expanding their investments that directly serve the bourgeoisie by provision of gated communities along the fringes.⁹⁹ This further pressured the poor and intensified the gap between the rich with tools of leisure and consumption and the poor with their limited space to survive. The authorities and the investors succeeded in segregating the two styles of urban living. Control of urban spaces became critical, and instead of welfare provision or making reforms, the authorities were policing the poor to keep them locked out. However, with every policy declared by the state to enhance urban projects and open new economic activities for the investors and private sector, the ordinary poor citizens stood defending their homes, spaces, and share of life.

The communal needs of the lower livelihoods were neglected by the authorities. Therefore, the informal sector and the urban associational life were the solutions. Many urban poor including *Zabbaleen* assumed role out of self-help as the ideal entrepreneurial responsibilized citizen in the informal economy where the government provides no protection or cuts. On the other hand, NGOs and civil society assumed the responsibility of advocacy for the marginalized that fits the international context of civil society development since 1980s. yet, there were many incentives to register as non-profit company rather than civil society organization to avoid restrictions. Therefore, the state developmental role towards the marginalized poor was privatized by NGOs.

⁹⁸ Kuppinger, 623.

⁹⁹ Kuppinger, 623.

Among those marginalized poor were the *Zabbaleen* in the waste management system who went through many struggles and tensions with the state. Among the laws that directly affected them were:

- 1- Law 4 of 1994 organizes the different specifications of waste management system with the contractors with special attention to hazardous waste. As a result, Egyptian environmental affairs agency was established to supervise the application of the law.¹⁰⁰
- 2- Law 10 of 2005 adds the garbage collection fees of EGP1-EGP10 to electricity bills collected by the governorates. This law was passed after contracting multinationals.¹⁰¹
- 3- The Health Ministry's ban of pigs' ownership in 2009.

And I will explain in later chapter how these policies affected *Zabbaleen's* enterprises.

Post-2011 Continuity and Change

The uprisings of 2011 proposed a threat to the continuity of neoliberal policies. Despite their support to Mubarak's policies during his term, the IFIs declared the failure of the neoliberal policies of the previous regime to stabilize the socio-economic situation in Egypt.¹⁰² According to the IFIs, the uprising erupted because of the weak governance and crony capitalism; therefore, they saw an opportunity in the uprisings to introduce deeply rooted reforms to achieve good governance while addressing people's demands for jobs and better living standards.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ CID, 36-39.

¹⁰¹ Iskandar et al., 28.

¹⁰² Joya, 344.

¹⁰³ Joya, 344.

This period is divided into three phases: the SCAF rule (February 2011- May 2012), FJP rule (June 2012–July 2013), and Abdel-fattah el-Sisi’s rule (2014-present). During SCAF, Egypt witnessed decline in growth rates, foreign reserves, and revenues. The rulers reduced expenditure dismissing public need for food, shelter, and good wages to control budget deficit.¹⁰⁴ Law 34 of 2011 was passed to criminalize “strike action, protest at work, calling for strikes or taking part in strike movement, or any “activity” that [could]... delay or stop work”¹⁰⁵ to stabilize the country and encourage business and investments. Moreover, “the SCAF issued Law 4/2012, creating an extra-judicial committee to resolve cases of embezzlement, undermining the ability of Egypt’s courts to hold investors accountable.”¹⁰⁶ However, investment did not increase.

During FJP rule, they wanted to prove that Islam and capitalism are compatible, so they promoted economic freedom and private-sector development. Directly after the uprisings of 2011, they established the Egyptian Business Development Association (EBDA) that resembles its Turkish counterpart to support SMEs.¹⁰⁷ The “government proposed cuts to food and fuel subsidies and introduction of a regressive VAT to increase tax revenues, measures which were bound to unfairly hurt the poor.”¹⁰⁸

During the presidential elections in 2012, Mohamed Morsi, the former president who represented FJP, ran his presidential campaign by a program of 64 promises that should all be accomplished

¹⁰⁴ Joya, 347.

¹⁰⁵ Joya, 347.

¹⁰⁶ Joya, 347.

¹⁰⁷ Joya, 349.

¹⁰⁸ Joya, 349.

in 100 days. One of these promises was to solve the issue of compiling garbage in Cairo streets. Morsi committed himself to resolve the issue of garbage to be able to restore tourism and investment, which fit the bigger picture of Neoliberal goals.¹⁰⁹

Zabbaleen were the answer to the garbage problem; however, they were not recognized by the government despite their very efficient system that also provided work for women and youth who used to suffer from unemployment.¹¹⁰ Moreover, the lifting of pigs' ban was never introduced into the picture, and many *Zabbaleen* thought that pigs ownership would never be allowed because of the Islamist identity of the government who prefer not having pigs in Egypt. After the ban on trash-eating pigs, many of the *Zabbaleen* were deprived from a crucial part of their tools in their waste disposal system. As a result, their performance was negatively affected, and streets became full of trash waiting for disposal.¹¹¹ They had to buy pigs from the black market and violate the ban for their living and their children's living. They had continuous efforts to lift the ban since 2011, but the Health Ministry did not respond, and this reaction did not change after Morsi came to power.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Ernesto Londoño, 2012. "Egypt's garbage crisis bedevils Morsi," *Washington Post*, 26 August 2012. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/egypts-garbage-crisis-bedevils-morsi/2012/08/26/6fdfad1e-ec6a-11e1-866f-60a00f604425_story.html?utm_term=.b310ca68ec70

¹¹⁰ Marion Guénard, "Cairo puts its faith in ragpickers to manage the city's waste problem," *The Guardian*, 19 November 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/19/cairo-ragpickers-zabaleen-egypt-recycling>.

¹¹¹ Londoño.

¹¹² Londoño.

The companies that were hired for garbage disposal usually burn or send the non-recyclable garbage to landfills. According to the head of a waste collection company serving the Giza district, companies also could not afford to pay their garbage collectors their salaries because of the negative economic spillovers of 2011, so companies' collectors did not work efficiently.¹¹³

Ezzat Naem, head of the *Zabaleen* Union, told The Guardian that "we have always been treated as a backward people incapable of managing the refuse of such a large town. And yet we are the ones who invented an eco-city model."¹¹⁴

Sisi continued with Mubarak's framework of neoliberal economic policies. He launched a series of reforms to reduce the budget deficit, expand government revenues, cut public expenditures, and attract investments, declaring that it will be a painful journey of austerity.

On 1st of August 2016, "President al-Sisi said that offering subsidies for those not in need had for decades aggravated Egypt's internal debt and led to a waste of state resources. Low-income brackets and those who deserve more care and consideration would not be affected by economic reforms."¹¹⁵ Since 2014, Egypt has started a five-year program of increasing the prices and cut the electricity and fuel subsidies. According to the government, the late 2016 price hikes ranged "from 25 to 40% depending on consumption levels.... because dwindling local production had forced the country to import more gas for power generation in recent years."¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Londoño.

¹¹⁴ Guénard

¹¹⁵ "Drought and Hunger," *Africa Research Bulletin*, 2016, 21345-21346.

¹¹⁶ "Drought and Hunger," 21345-21346.

On the 3rd of November 2016, the central bank declared the floatation of the Egyptian pound as a reaction to the IMF restructuring plan. Government plan was to increase the foreign direct investment by stabilizing the security situation and introducing large-scale projects. The 2015 Sharm elSheikh Conference was used to reintroduce Egypt to foreign direct investments.¹¹⁷ And “the Suez Canal Area Development Project offers opportunities for PPPs (public-private partnerships) in infrastructure, transportation, health, education, sewage, housing, slum upgrading, agriculture, energy, marble and mineral extraction.”¹¹⁸ He also implemented privatization programs in different sectors and legislative reforms to promote investment, such as Article 28 of 2014 constitution. Further protection was granted for the investors with the modified investment law in March 2015. And on the 11th of November 2016, IMF approved a loan of 12 billion dollars. However, despite the efforts to attract FDI, the military intervention remains critical because “the military already controlled approximately 40 percent of the economy, including civilian manufacturing, hotels, supermarkets, shipping companies, real estate and housing companies, vast agricultural farms and parking lots.”¹¹⁹

Under Sisi, a new initiative/policy was adopted that would threaten *Zabbaleens*' interests. Recycling kiosks were launched to buy people's trash, which might propose unfair competition against the *Zabbaleen* and cut off their main source of income. The policy poses a dilemma because *Zabbaleen*'s waste disposal system is one of the greenest systems in the world. They recycle 85%

¹¹⁷ “The Political Side of Egypt's Economic Ordeal,” *Berli* : *Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung*, 2017, <https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/egypt-paper3-economy.pdf>.

¹¹⁸ Joya 2017, 352.

¹¹⁹ Joya, 349.

of the waste, which is higher than in the West with lower cost.¹²⁰ When people sympathized with them against their marginalization during Mubarak, new strategy was needed to reduce people's sympathy with them and modernize waste management system. The new alternative strategy was providing people with cash. People started to perceive value in garbage and sell them rather than giving them to *Zabbaleen* with fees payment. As one of the *Zabbaleen* said to Ahram Online, "I respect MP Nadia Henry, but this initiative is not for the sake of [improving] hygiene in Egypt; it is for commerce. Those kiosks are fooling the citizens."¹²¹ And despite the *Zabbaleen*'s and the *Zabbaleen* syndicate's expression of anger over their jobs' loss to the officials, media, and citizens, the policy is still in place.

It is very important to note the development of the roles of the government, NGOS, informal workers in the political economy and state-society relations in relation or in opposition to one another, and *Zabbaleen* of the Garbage Village is my case study for my dissertation to contextualize the Urban poor. This chapter tackles the top-down economic policies that were enforced by the state since Nasser era till present, and how their policies and regulations were

¹²⁰ Edmund Bower, "In the government's latest attempt to clean up Cairo," *American Chamber of Commerce*, May 2017, Accessed August 12, 2018.

<https://www.amcham.org.eg/publications/business-monthly/issues/257/May-2017/3577/>.

¹²¹ Zeinab El-Gundy, "Sell Your Garbage: Egypt's new recycling initiative brings hope for some, threat to others," *Ahram Online*, 13 April 2017. Accessed August 12, 2018.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/151/262824/Egypt/Features/Sell-Your-Garbage-Egypt-s-new-recycling-initiative-.aspx>.

flawed because they neglected, in fact marginalized, the poor lower classes, to which *Zabbaleen* belong, who refuse to give up their lives to international corporates and globalized visions. And for the later chapters, they will explain primarily the art of presence by the *Zabbaleen* as representatives of these marginalized poor.

Chapter 4

Adaptation to (Neo)Liberalism

After the introduction of the neoliberal policies and opening up, the government was pressured to attract global investors, tourists, and international events, so they had to prepare good infrastructure with good transportation and communication system, encourage consumerism by increasing the standards and the quality of the shopping centers, upmarket entertainment, and leisure services, provide cultural institutions, and most importantly keep all of these places and facilities clean and safe.

The *Zabbaleen* community give a clear demonstration of the art of presence despite the marginalization and the neglectful rule and policies that they suffer from. They showed creativity and collective action to come up with new spaces and opportunities from what is already available to them. And this is what constitute their lives as politics. This “art of presence is the fundamental moment in the life of non-movements.”¹²²

Because the organized politics, the authorities, and the formal rule did not give them justice; rather they marginalized them without even giving them the least government intervention that is required by neoliberalism to protect them under law and private property rights. The community decided to move directly to protect themselves and meet their needs, struggling for a net result of politics of redress by their individual acts.¹²³

¹²² Petra Kuppinger, "Crushed? Cairo's Garbage Collectors And Neoliberal Urban Politics." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 36, no.2 (2014), 624. doi:10.1111/juaf.12073.

¹²³ Kuppinger, "Crushed? Cairo's Garbage Collectors And Neoliberal Urban Politics".

As Assef Bayat explain how ordinary people use spaces to communicate and think of ideas to overcome their collective difficulties and complications. Bayat would not consider such non-movement as political protest or resistance, but I would think of these collective actions as continuous action of resistance against their degrading conditions and environment. A movement of exerting effort to improve their living. Therefore, their daily activities of production, trade, recycling, communication, etc. display these movement of adopting the general frame and premises of neoliberalism and attempting to adapt their local culture and living to this environment with the least possible disadvantages, wishing that one day these activities can end up with a real positive social change. However, we cannot dismiss that these grassroots activities that work within the lines of the neoliberal norms are in fact charging the battery of neoliberalism that could be one of the reasons behind its continuity despite its drawbacks.

International Donors and Aid

Under Nasser, the Muqattam Garbage community were living in Embaba in Giza until a decree of relocation was released in 1969. The community received a four-day eviction notice from the authorities in 1970 and were relocated into Muqattam village in 1970s.¹²⁴ The living conditions were horrible, lacking basic services and suffering from multiple fires. These were caused by the combustion of organic wastes or inability to control the fire they intentionally set to dispose the remaining wastes. The settlement witnessed high poverty. With Liberalization and international donors' intervention, these conditions have changed positively when they started to receive multiple funds from the World Bank and other international donors under the introduction of

¹²⁴ Wael S. Fahmi and Keith Sutton, "Cairo's Zabaleen garbage recyclers: Multi-nationals' takeover and state relocation plans," *Habitat International* 30 (2006), 812.

neoliberal policies in Egypt and the government's receipt of aids and loans. The garbage village of Muqattam provides a smart interaction between international donors and low-income urban settlements, which reveals interesting dynamic, building partnership to enhance urban sociality and environment. The *Zabbaleen* Environmental Development Program (ZEDP) was created in 1981 by the World Bank.¹²⁵ As a result, eight main projects were activated: the Community Upgrading and Infrastructure Extension Project, The Internal Clean-up of the Main *Zabbaleen* Settlement Project, The Small Industries Project, the Route Extension Project, the *Zabbaleen* Mechanization Project, the *Zabbaleen* Composting Plant Project, the Women-Headed Households Project, and the Institution Building of the *Zabbaleen* Gam'iya (AGCCD).¹²⁶ These funds were to upgrade the quality of their life and enable them to meet the increasing demand for waste collection.¹²⁷ The funds were used to build the infrastructure, meet the community's basic needs for living, and improve the settlement. The settlement was provided with piped water, electricity, sewerage networks, and paved streets with names and numbers. They also provided them with educational and health services.¹²⁸ This helped them to accumulate capital after the land's prices had increased because they became more secure that there will be no more eviction.

¹²⁵ Fahmi and Sutton, "Cairo's Zabaleen garbage recyclers: Multi-nationals' takeover and state relocation plans."

¹²⁶ Doaa, 82-83

¹²⁷ Elena Volpi, "Community Organization and Development," *Cairo Papers in Social Science* 19, no.4, (1996), 17-18.

¹²⁸ Elena Volpi, "Community Organization and Development," 17-18

The settlement also received aid from the Ford Foundation, Oxfam, and the Soeur Emmanuelle Fund for the Internal Clean-up Project to realize cleanliness in the settlement under the direction of the AGCCD. Efforts of waste removal were conducted daily until 1987. However, later this project was halted, and the settlement became dirty again because once the residents fully paid the trucks installments, they were not committed to cleaning the settlement due to the absence of the incentives.¹²⁹

Another important project was Small Industries Project that was funded by Oxfam to offer the marginalized residents business opportunities to create small community-based recycling industries to maximize the value generated from waste. Ford Foundation also funded the Women-Headed Households project extending credit to widows, divorcees, and women with unemployed or disabled husbands, who represent the poorest and most vulnerable group in the settlement.”¹³⁰ This project offers loans, and the recipients are located through a self-selection mechanism. And they choose which enterprise they want to invest in. Sadly, the project fails to be self-sustainable because its fund does not cover the administrative cost and has problems with marketing.¹³¹

In addition, the European community, the Ford Foundation, and the Soeur Emmanuelle Fund have jointly contributed to fund the formation of a composting plant that uses rudimentary technology

¹²⁹ Mounir Neamatalla, *Zabbaleen Environment & Development Program* (Cairo: The Mega Cities Project, 1998), 8.

¹³⁰ Mounir Neamatalla, *Zabbaleen Environment & Development Program*, 9.

¹³¹ Mounir Neamatalla, *Zabbaleen Environment & Development Program*, 9.

that is easily operated and maintained.¹³² It transforms organic waste into salable fertilizer and generate funds for other activities.

The development aids of ZEDP and its projects were used by the *Zabbaleen* to upgrade themselves through the existing structural and urban systems. Through these development aids, they combined different social, economic, environmental, and technological elements of upscale to invest diversely in their capital. And on 5th of January 2015, World Bank declared the new Cairo Municipal Solid Waste Management Project to develop Cairo waste management system by consultation with the primary stakeholder, *Zabbaleen*, yet the fund of US\$150 million will be given to Cairo governorate.¹³³ With the help of these international donors, *Zabbaleen* oppose the need for importing high cost materials and energy intensive equipment while they offer cheap and renewable source of raw materials generated from waste that can be converted into useful products, benefiting from the contradiction of neoliberalism.

Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship, and Capital Accumulation

Before 1970s there was no municipal waste management; rather municipal workers only cleaned public areas. Moreover, poor neighborhoods were not serviced with garbage collection. Although the *Zabbaleen* are negatively stigmatized as uneducated poor who lack hygiene and environmental awareness, they managed to adapt to opening-up and (neo)liberalization more than other different sectors. This negative stigma is falsely maintained because of the neoliberal tendency to enforce the globally accepted standard onto any local venture. They adopted many of the neoliberal

¹³²Mounir Neamatalla, *Zabbaleen Environment & Development Program*, 12.

¹³³ World Bank, *Cairo Municipal Solid Waste Management Project*, (Project Information Document, 2015), 9.

premises and norms and applied them efficiently to fit in their already existing values, culture, and economic activities. They enhanced their collective management of wastes to maximize their utility by increasing the recycling rate and reducing the amount of unused waste. The economic activities that the *Zabbaleen* take part in are: garbage collection, transportation, recovery of primary materials, SMEs trading activities, and Recycling industries. They created their own business culture of credit, trade, and finance.

Management of waste in the informal sector is divided into two sectors. The first is the informal service sector, in which individuals and micro-enterprises in informal service providers (ISPs) earn “fees for removal of waste, excreta, litter, and, is more broadly considered, ‘dirt’.”¹³⁴ And the informal valorization sector, which consists of “individuals, co-operatives, family, and micro-enterprises, functioning as an extractive resource industry. The main activity of this sector is identifying and removing valuable materials from the waste stream and the places where waste accumulates and valorizing (extracting value added from) them.”¹³⁵ The workers in this latter sector are paid in kilos or tons, and they focus on extracting profitable materials rather than protecting the environment. Because their materials and recyclables are sold and exported, they are connected to global recycling industry through supply and sales chain. Therefore, any policy

¹³⁴ Ellen Gunsilius et al., *The Economics of the Informal Sector* (Frankfurt: Collaborative Working Group on Solid Waste (CWG) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale (GIZ), 2011), 12.

¹³⁵ Ellen Gunsilius et al., *The Economics of the Informal Sector*, 12.

or action affecting their economic activities, would negatively affect the global recycling industry because of the trans-boundary economic consequences.¹³⁶

Valorization/recycling sectors are divided into: plastic, cloth/rags, paper and cardboard compactors, aluminum smelters, tin, animal bones, and glass. Table 1 shows the distribution of trading activities of the different materials while plastic stands as the most commonly recycled and traded material.

Table 1¹³⁷

Distribution of Trading Activities		
Type of Material	Number	Percentage
Plastic	17	30
Paper	16	29
Glass	5	9
Tin	11	20
Aluminum	1	2
Rags	4	8
Animal Bones	1	2

As some studies show that informal sector has better performance in low and middle-income countries^{138 139}. Informal entrepreneurs have wider experience with valorization activities and can

¹³⁶ Ellen Gunsilius et al., *The Economics of the Informal Sector*, 29.

¹³⁷ ZAB, *The Informal Solid Waste Sector in Egypt: Prospects for Formalization* (Toronto: ACORN International, 2011), 27.

¹³⁸ Anne Scheinberg, *Informal Sector Integration and High Performance Recycling: Evidence from 20 Cities* (Cambridge and Manchester: Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing, 2012).

¹³⁹ Ellen Gunsilius et al., *The Economics of the Informal Sector*.

divert and process different materials because of their specific knowledge of identifying and marketing. They offer social and economic benefit to the formal municipalities, offering employment for the unskilled and marginalized poor people who otherwise might have needed social assistance from the governments.

Although the *Zabbaleen* are socially disadvantaged and with less business knowledge, they realize the original neoliberal promise of opportunities for all people and equal chances not the only the elites/bourgeoisie.

Table 2: The Distribution of waste management labor in informal sector in Cairo¹⁴⁰

Largest group of informal workers	Informal waste collection – Zabbaleen
% of IS persons in largest group	71%
Second largest group of informal workers	Small-scale manufacturing
% of IS persons in second largest group	25%
Other informal workers active	IWBs, dump

*IWB stands for itinerant waste buyers

The labor in informal waste management is broken down as seen in table 2. The “average number of workers in the garbage collectors' enterprise, i.e. the garbage collector, his unpaid family workers and other paid wage earners who collectively work on the collection routes and recovery

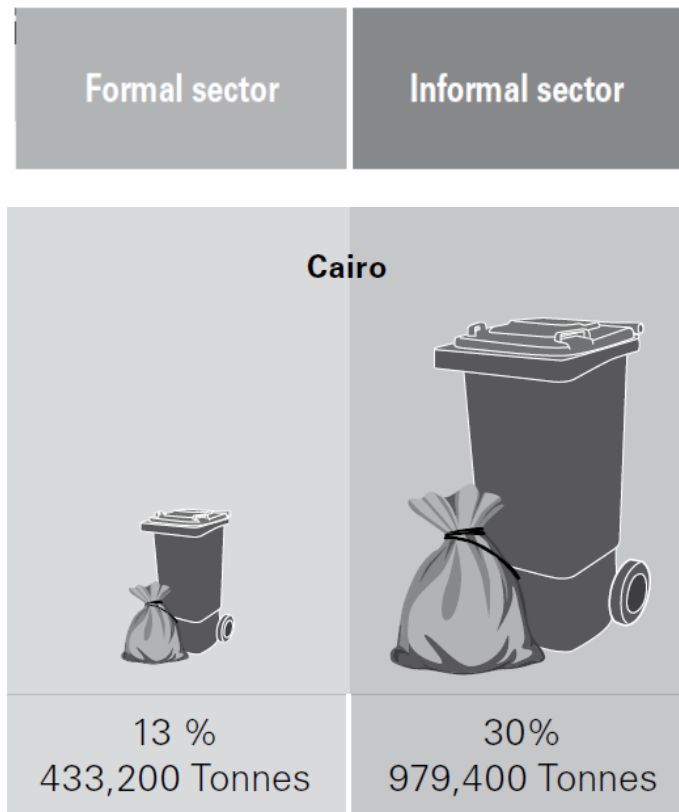
¹⁴⁰ Ellen Gunsilius et al., *The Economics of the Informal Sector*, 13.

of primary materials is 7.4 persons. The average number of workers in the trading enterprises is 4.6 workers/enterprise and 6.7 in each of the recycling workshops.”¹⁴¹ In mid 1990s, “nearly 700 families owned collection enterprises, 200 owned and operated small- and medium-scale recycling enterprises, and 120 owned trading enterprises, in addition to maintenance workshops and community-based service businesses. These micro-entrepreneurs invested an estimated LE 2.1 million (US\$ 350,000) in purchasing trucks, plastic granulators, paper compactors, cloth grinders, aluminum smelters and tin processors.”¹⁴² Moreover, the relevant recycling methods for each of the materials were always upgraded. The informal sector usually ends up selling their recyclables to the formal sector factories and exporters while sometimes the formal sector’s employees might sell their recyclables unofficially to the informal sector’s merchants. The informal sector also can earn some work with contract with the municipal authorities, in addition to their work of informal recycling. They also have their local markets, such as Friday market, to sell the old used things found in garbage.

¹⁴¹ CID, *The Informal Sector in Waste Recycling in Egypt* (CID Consulting, 2008), 21.

¹⁴² Wael Salah Fahmi, "The impact of privatization of solid waste management on the Zabaleen garbage collectors of Cairo." *Environment & Urbanization* 17, no.2 (2005): 158.

Figure 1: Comparison of the total waste generated by the two sectors in Cairo¹⁴³



The formal sector has high operational cost because the collected quantities of garbage are limited, and the revenues of the collected materials to the value chain are exceeded by the cost. Although its operational cost is as relatively high as in the formal sector, the informal sector managed to generate higher revenues. The main success of the informal valorization sector is that they succeeded in sustaining the valuable income for their communities with a net profit.¹⁴⁴

The best case scenario is when they can access the garbage at the earliest part in the chain to store and sort them at homes, which would save the cost of dealing with contaminated garbage that have not been sorted properly in the beginning. Therefore, efficiency indicate that they should control

¹⁴³ Ellen Gunsilius et al., *The Economics of the Informal Sector*, 15.

¹⁴⁴ Ellen Gunsilius et al., *The Economics of the Informal Sector*, 18.

waste from collection to disposal. Their trade also offers an environmental opportunity for the government because they reach recycling rates far higher than the formal sector, preventing pollution and the waste of lands used as landfills.

Over the last fifty years, the number of collection enterprises and the served households has increased, and the IS growing capacity and their comparative advantage over the formal sector have also increased. They can respond to demand driven forces and create efficient systems. And as trade and recycling enterprises increase, they need more capital. Therefore, to overcome the issue of land ownership that was needed for sale, renting, trading and recycling, they formed a new social contract and constructed a new social structure to replace the nationally accepted legal contracts of ownership. They recognized each other's right to land that they work or live in, and this ownership is honored. This facilitated their activities of renting or sale of properties to generate income and capital used to invest.¹⁴⁵ They do not have collaterals, so their real collaterals are their networks of social relations. If the reputation of the borrower has been tarnished, this shakes people's trust in him/her and threatens his/her future business opportunities. "From 1996 to 2000, the number of workshops in Mokattam increased by approximately 40%. The recycling workshops in the area created approximately 43% new job opportunities during that four-year period (1996-2000)."¹⁴⁶ "The major sources of capital for small scale and micro enterprises in Greater Cairo tend to be savings from previous work (41%), inheritance (25%), friends and relatives (13%) and rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs) (13%)."¹⁴⁷ only 7% of the

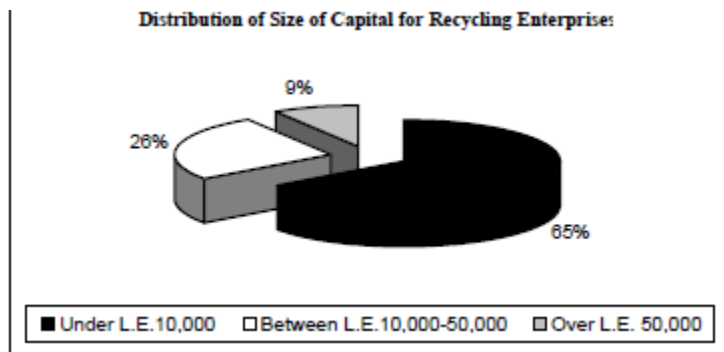
¹⁴⁵ CID, *The Informal Sector in Waste Recycling in Egypt* (CID Consulting, 2008), 20.

¹⁴⁶ CID, *The Informal Sector in Waste Recycling in Egypt* (CID Consulting, 2008), 21.

¹⁴⁷ ZAB, *The Informal Solid Waste Sector in Egypt: Prospects for Formalization*, 45.

enterprises depended on loans.¹⁴⁸ Figure 3 shows the distribution of the size of capital on the recycling enterprises in Muqattam.

Figure 2 ¹⁴⁹



The informal sector tends to accumulate more capital and be more profitable than the formal sector for three reasons. First, unlike the formal sector, their target is to make profit from valorization activities rather than disposal or environmental protection. Second, in terms of logistics and the operation cost, because they quantity of collected garbage is more than that collected by the formal sector, the former's revenue is greater. Third the informal sector reaches higher level of sales of the materials to the factories and exporters. The informal sector tends to have a wider network that help them in marketing their materials to the recycling industry while the official authorities lack this support in this field, lagging in the trading activities.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ ZAB, *The Informal Solid Waste Sector in Egypt: Prospects for Formalization*, 45.

¹⁴⁹ ZAB, *The Informal Solid Waste Sector in Egypt: Prospects for Formalization*, 53.

¹⁵⁰ Ellen Gunsilius et al., *The Economics of the Informal Sector*.

In terms of the environmental impact, the informal valorization also results in less carbon emissions, so the informal sector improves the carbon footprint of waste management, reducing decomposition and methane formation that happen in the landfills by avoiding disposal, obtaining raw materials for recycling, and re-entry of secondary raw materials to production process. Therefore, they use “less energy in recycling processes than in production processes with primary raw materials.”¹⁵¹

In terms of fossil energy use, the informal activities are better in reducing its usage especially because they depend on the humans and animals rather than motorized vehicles and machines. However, on the long term with the increasing quantities, this might pose a threat to the sustainability of these activities.

Figure 3: Comparison of the environmental benefits associated with garbage collection by the two sectors in Cairo, expressed by reducing the negative externality costs in Euros¹⁵²



On the Social dimension, although the working conditions are not favorable; in fact, they are unsafe and uncomfortable, they enjoy two privileges. The wages are higher than the legal minimum wage levels, so they earn higher than what they would earn in formal sectors.

¹⁵¹ Ellen Gunsilius et al., *The Economics of the Informal Sector*, 20.

¹⁵² Ellen Gunsilius et al., *The Economics of the Informal Sector*, 21.

Furthermore, they enjoy the benefit of relative freedom and autonomy as reported by some *Zabbaleen*. The average informal worker's earnings are 2,721 euro per year.¹⁵³

The fact that it is informal does not entail that it is unorganized. In fact, this sector is the base of the industrial value chain and feeds it. And over time, trade lead to accumulation, which would lead to more capital with more added value commodities.

Tourism

The residents of the village are particularly happy when they see strangers in their settlements. In Egypt, the revenues of tourism benefit a limited sector mainly investors, entrepreneurs, and financiers. But the garbage village has been using tourism as well to naturalize market-based environmental initiatives. The village's tourists are "students and young professionals in their late twenties to early forties, men and women from North America, Europe and Australia."¹⁵⁴ With their background and subjectivities, these tourists have economic and social capital that could be of benefit to the community in diverse ways. Yet tourists are not only foreigners, but also Egyptians who are outsiders to the community.

The tour includes visit to St. Simeon Church complex, a description of the settlement followed with a walk in the village, a visit to a resident NGO, APE, and finally a visit to Gerges' house where Urban Sustainability, NGO that promotes sustainable development and usage of bio-gas digester is located, sidelining other community projects.

¹⁵³ Ellen Gunsilius et al., *The Economics of the Informal Sector*, 22.

¹⁵⁴ Elisa Wynne-Hughes, "Governing Through Garbage-City Tourism." *International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 17, no. 6 (2015): 842, doi:10.1080/1369801X.2014.998264.

Garbage village has two benefits from these tours: commercial and informative (for both sides). The community represent themselves as innovative neoliberal entrepreneurs, bragging about the technologies that they have come up with to reach high recycling rate and turn these recyclables into marketable products and their ability to resolve the issue of unemployment and offer environmental service for Egypt.

According to some interviews conducted with tourists:

“Tourists stated that the area’s innovations are a ‘lesson for the rest of the world’ and that ‘the West’s recycling system is nowhere near as successful’. Several commented that Garbage-City is a real ‘free-market’ system or a ‘true democracy’ run from below by market forces, implying – in line with neoliberal logics – that the free-market system is the ideal and defines democracy. Their comments positioned residents as non-western free market entrepreneurs and themselves as worldly westerners through their awareness of the community’s recycling innovations, non-western neoliberal development models.”¹⁵⁵

The tourists are exposed to the complexities of the garbage village, exploring an urban eco-tourism site. However, there are some concerns against the future effect of tourism on the community. By time, the community would be full of tour buses, corrupting their living, the residents, and their trade, distorting their identity as being untouched community. Despite their struggles because of the neoliberal policies, ironically, they are selling to the tourists the idea that the free-market developments were evolved organically in this untouched community because they represent the common interest.

¹⁵⁵ Elisa Wynne-Hughes, "Governing Through Garbage-City Tourism," 845.

Therefore, tourists constitute the identity of responsible consumers who are willing to help the community in its development. And this was part of the marketing strategy for the tour as it was announced on the Venture Tours website. It was announced that “the company funds the materials and installment of a bio-gas digester for every twenty-four visitors to the area.”¹⁵⁶ This scheme was justified that “bio-gas digesters not only have a lasting impact on the community’ but also they are constructed cheaply from the same ‘found materials’ used by garbage workers to make a living.”¹⁵⁷

When I visited the settlement with a group of interracial scholars, many of us were buying products for themselves or as souvenirs for families and friends, socializing with the residents, and even playing with the kids. I was confused what effect of ‘having outsiders into one’s settlement or even houses’ would be on the residents? I feared it might be inconvenience, and when I asked some of the residents, I was told by a lady that

“in fact, we love the look we see in the tourists’ eye when they come expecting to see some poor uneducated people, and then they are amazed by our improvements and establishments while many of us are educated and English-speakers. This comparison between how we started and what we ended up with is something to be proud of in front of tourists.” Another lady told me “tourism is a source of benefit for all of us. Tourists buy our products and learn about us, so we work more because they appreciate our art of recycling. in fact, we wish tourism would increase as it was before 2011 uprisings.”

¹⁵⁶ Elisa Wynne-Hughes, "Governing Through Garbage-City Tourism," 846.

¹⁵⁷ Elisa Wynne-Hughes, "Governing Through Garbage-City Tourism," 846.

Residents perceive the tourists as using their economic capital to help them financially. Tourists have high cultural capital to raise international awareness about the community and their recycling activities. This would affect their stability because the more the community is internationally recognized, the harder the government can relocate them. The tour reinforces the neoliberal discourse that all individuals are free to be creative and realize themselves within the market-based developments.

Unfortunately, the tours fail to show the marginalization of the community as a result of the international and Egyptian neoliberal practices and the hierarchies and inequalities within the community. Therefore, tourism does not help in dismantling the exclusion and inequalities within the community that will be further tackled in chapter 6. Rather, tourism is used as neoliberal practice and self-enterprising that promotes the free-market development model

Government Intervention and *Zabbaleen* Sustainability

El Zabbaleen exist in different developing countries. Sometimes the governments meet them with hostility, indifference, or welcome as useful actors in the management of waste.¹⁵⁸ The policies and legal framework are what define the relationship between the informal sector and authorities whether one of cooperation or conflict. Compared to the governments of Quezon city, Pune, and Lima that succeeded in integrating the informal sector in solid waste management and their recycling business whether through their legislations or public policy to maximize the efficiency of waste management and recycling, the Egyptian government failed to adopt any national legislations that would grant them property rights or protect their business.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, the formal

¹⁵⁸ Ellen Gunsilius et al., *The Economics of the Informal Sector*, 12.

¹⁵⁹ Ellen Gunsilius et al., *The Economics of the Informal Sector*, 12.

sector refused to cooperate officially with the informal sector, which put immense emphasis on the role of NGOs and civil society to fill this gap between the *Zabbaleen* and the authorities as will be explored in chapter 5.

In 1984, Cairo and Giza Cleansing and Beautification Authorities (CCBA) (GCBA) declared garbage routes and give licenses for garbage collection. Therefore, *Zabbaleen* had to pay for the municipality and the *wahiyas* who were responsible for issuing and renewal of their licenses, and yet licenses could have been refused easily. This declaration was a strategy of control and surveillance that was used to deal with *Zabbaleen*, in addition to neglectful rule. Municipalities integrated *Zabbaleen* only to control and supervise them.

In 1990 the donkey carts were banned. This ban cost them massive losses because they lacked licenses and capital to buy pick-up trucks. Therefore, only *Zabbaleen* who could save and have access to capital or small cooperatives managed to buy trucks and collect garbage from upper-class neighborhoods. And those who did not have the needed capital were limited to the less affluent neighborhoods because this ban was not enforced equally on the neighborhoods of Cairo and Giza, as a strategy of exclusion.¹⁶⁰

After modernization, the authorities thought that recycling will generate high revenue, therefore, they started to compete with informal recycling enterprises. In the 1990s, the authorities established some composting plants that were inadequately managed, and they were a real loss and inefficient. Although the materials generated by the informal sector would end up with those of the formal sector in the value chain, the informal sector generates more quantities into the value

¹⁶⁰ Kuppinger, "Crushed? Cairo's Garbage Collectors And Neoliberal Urban Politics," 626.

chain¹⁶¹. However, some larger companies profited from these plants that were directed to take from the share of the *Zabbaleen*. In 2000, the government used some inefficient local companies to collect garbage from poor neighborhoods and dispose them in landfills, causing pollution.¹⁶²

With the increasing privatization projects, *Zabbaleen* were threatened to lose access to their economic assets, garbage. Some may argue that this was in accordance with the 1990s IMF Structural Adjustment Program and World Bank economic strategies of privatization.¹⁶³

And again in 2004, *Zabbaleen*'s donkey carts were protested as a traffic hazard and eyesore by the municipal authorities.¹⁶⁴ Attempting to 'professionalize' Cairo's waste management, "Hosni Mubarak awarded annual contracts of \$50 million to three" Spanish and Italian "multinational garbage disposal companies. With the arrival of the multinationals, residents were suddenly asked to deposit their waste in large bins left in the street"¹⁶⁵. Cairo locals became reluctant to pay both to the Multinationals and the *Zabbaleen*. While Muqattam community recycle 85% of the collected garbage, multinationals only recycle 25% -50% of the collected garbage and dump the untreated

¹⁶¹ Ellen Gunsilius et al., *The Economics of the Informal Sector*, 14.

¹⁶² Kuppinger, "Crushed? Cairo's Garbage Collectors And Neoliberal Urban Politics," 627

¹⁶³ Wael Fahmi and Keith Sutton, "Cairo's Contested Garbage: Sustainable Solid Waste Management and the Zabaleen's Right to the City".

¹⁶⁴ Fahmi and Sutton, "Cairo's Zabaleen garbage recyclers: Multi-nationals' takeover and state relocation plans".

¹⁶⁵ Itziar Aguirre, "Cairo's 'Zabaleen' Garbage Collectors: Egypt's Diamond in the Rough." *Global Risks Insights*, 12 June 2015.

rest in landfills, causing pollution and harm to economy and tourism.¹⁶⁶ Many of the Egyptian population sympathized with the *Zabbaleen* not only because of their recycling potential, but also because the *Zabbaleen* understood the Egyptians' culture, and they are used to coming to the houses 'doorsteps to collect garbage. Moreover, when the *Zabbaleen*'s access to garbage became limited, many fronts including formal and informal private recycling sectors were negatively affected after the reduced recycling rate, so they became advocates for the *Zabbaleen*.¹⁶⁷

In 2009, when swine flu was widespread, Mubarak did not listen to WHO recommendations and slaughtered 300,000 pigs which are the main processor of organic waste and a good source of income in the garbage village because owners used to sell them to tourist companies, hotels, and local pork businesses; thus, the livelihood and the socio-economic sustainability of thousands of families were jeopardized. This decision constitutes the strongest attack on *Zabbaleen*. It can be argued that the slaughtering of pigs served the larger agenda of relocating the settlement. Government compensations for pigs slaughtering were insufficient to re-establish many households that were depended on pigs for both waste consumption and breeding or selling them to pork outlets to generate income.¹⁶⁸ Others might argue that it was a political move to pacify the Islamists at the time due to the religious and social stigma attached to pigs breeding. However, threat of swine flu was later replaced with threat of typhus and other diseases due to accumulated

¹⁶⁶ Fahmi and Sutton, "Cairo's Zabaleen garbage recyclers: Multi-nationals' takeover and state relocation plans," 812.

¹⁶⁷ CID, *The Informal Sector in Waste Recycling in Egypt* (CID Consulting, 2008), 23.

¹⁶⁸ Wael Fahmi and Keith Sutton, "Cairo's Contested Garbage: Sustainable Solid Waste Management and the Zabaleen's Right to the City".

waste and garbage.¹⁶⁹ Nonetheless, according to my interlocutors, many residents managed to hide and keep some pigs.

Many disagreements happened between the authorities and the Multinationals. The former was accusing the latter for not offering proper services while the latter was accusing the former for not paying their full sum, so they had to cut down their services. Meanwhile, the streets became very dirty, and the Multinationals' workers protested because they did not receive their salaries.¹⁷⁰ In addition, the World Bank released a report that 0.5% of Egyptian GDP is lost because of the inefficacy in the solid waste policies.¹⁷¹ As a result, the Egyptian government had to accept the *Zabbaleen* and gave them uniforms and vehicles.¹⁷² Moreover, the companies realized that they could not get the job done by sidelining the *Zabbaleen*, so they began hiring them as subcontractors paying them less than what they received from the *Wahiyas*; however, they were granted an access to garbage for recycling.¹⁷³

Government intervention in Egypt remains to be one of critical features whether they are promoting neoliberalism or not. *Zabbaleen* represent the informal private sector and the government is marginalizing them when they represent the primary stakeholders. *Zabbaleen* work

¹⁶⁹ Wael Fahmi and Keith Sutton, "Cairo's Contested Garbage: Sustainable Solid Waste Management and the Zabaleen's Right to the City."

¹⁷⁰ Kuppinger, "Crushed? Cairo's Garbage Collectors And Neoliberal Urban Politics," 627.

¹⁷¹ Itziar Aguirre, "Cairo's 'Zabaleen' Garbage Collectors: Egypt's Diamond in the Rough."

¹⁷² Kuppinger, "Crushed? Cairo's Garbage Collectors And Neoliberal Urban Politics," 627.

¹⁷³ Wael Fahmi and Keith Sutton, "Cairo's Contested Garbage: Sustainable Solid Waste Management and the Zabaleen's Right to the City."

within the absence of government's protection (if it is not contestation). They even abandon the law protection. The government need to reevaluate its decisions and how they impact local income, employment, and environmental conditions. The government should seek more efforts of formalizing the *Zabbaleen* and forming public-private partnership that would represent the localization of neoliberalism into the Egyptian needs, benefiting both parties.

Chapter 5

Grassroot Community Development Movement

The First Phase: Change in the community and Construction of the church

When the garbage community were relocated into Mokattam village in 1970s,¹⁷⁴ their living conditions were intolerable. They were living around pieces of broken rocks in makeshift housing and shacks. All my interlocutors mentioned that in early 1970s, they were living in tins, surrounded by trash and animals with no barriers, *Zaraib*. The turning point for this community was an interesting story that is passed from one generation into another when a *zabbal* (Qidees Abdel-Meseeh) used to collect garbage from a loyal servant to the church in Shobra (St. Samaan). St. Samaan preached him about the way to god. Later from 1972 to 1974, Qidees was requesting St. Samaan to visit the community to preach them because the community did not pray or know god properly. According to my interlocutors and the documentary “A Heavenly Message in Whirlwind/*Resala Samawya fi Asefa Hawaeya*”¹⁷⁵ that all the community believes in, in early 1970s the community was drowned in sins; they were drinking alcoholics all the time, taking drugs and narcotics, never praying, and living in “*Hals*” (as my interlocutors define, which means a living of sins). When he finally agreed and visited them, he was astonished with their corrupt living. They were hard workers in trash collecting, yet their living was horrific because of pollution and unhygienic living conditions. He kept asking god “how can I help them?” While he was

¹⁷⁴ Wael S. Fahmi and Keith Sutton, "Cairo's Zabaleen garbage recyclers: Multi-nationals' takeover and state relocation plans," *Habitat International* 30 (2006), 809-837.

¹⁷⁵ *A Heavenly Message in Whirleind*, dir. by Ibrahim Abdel Sayed (2013).

praying with Qidees in the cave, a whirlwind caused all the papers to strew. One paper fell before them, reading a verse from the bible "The Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no-one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city."¹⁷⁶ He believed that this was a heavenly message and told H.H. Pope Shenouda III what happened. The Pope replied that "It was not a mere piece of paper, but a heavenly edict."

St. Samaan decided to consistently visit the area to serve the god. He built the church with tin where he found the paper. He also created Sunday School Kids and general meetings for the men and women. St. Samaan was chasing people to preach and advise them. Only nine who came at the first meeting, but later after five months, the room could not contain all who came.

Then later, with the help of Pope Shenouda III and bishop Samuel with money and provision of labor, the church was upgraded and built in bricks and concrete. The current church represents the third trial for its construction.

This story is indeed valuable to the residents of the community, not only because it transformed their lives, but also because it is full of miracles that provide them with hope and heavenly assistance. Among the most narrated miracles are two incidents. The first is when the community needed water during the church's construction, St. Samaan found a tractor pulling a container of water at the edge of Muqattam, so he asked the driver if he could provide them with water. Unexpectedly the driver agreed without hesitation. Second, on the 19th of January 1977 a tractor, backing up, crushed a 6 years-old child's head. The community was consistently praying for the

¹⁷⁶ Acts. 18:9-10.

hospitalized child in a coma, asking for a miracle. And after seven days, the child returned to the community in good health.

With the community's insistence to make St. Samaan the priest of the church, it was officially declared, and on the 18th of June 1977, Pope Shenouda III visited the church. This visit was repeated every year on the feast of Saint Samaan the Tanner until 1980.

The Second Phase: Creation of associations

In the second phase of community development, religious figures and institutions moved from their traditional religious role to relieve the oppressed and assumed active role in mobilizing them for community action. This phenomenon was not limited only to the Garbage village but was witnessed in all over Egypt.¹⁷⁷ Many catalysts worked to get the *Zabaleen* community from oppression to empowerment, such as the intervention of the Coptic Orthodox Bishop, the community priests, Egyptian consulting firm (CID), autonomous community based non-profit associations, Soeur Emmanuelle, the Coptic Orthodox nuns from the Order of Daughters of Mary, Sisters of Charity (Mother Theresa of India who organized the only outpatient clinic in 1982), among other NGOs and firms.¹⁷⁸

Among the most famous religious figures in the settlement is Soeur Emmanuelle, a French Belgium Catholic nun who created the Association Soeur Emmanuelle. She paid special attention to the public services (water supply and electricity) and provided them with summer vacations in

¹⁷⁷ Laila R. Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village* (Cairo: Stallion Graphics, 1994), 14.

¹⁷⁸ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 92.

Fayed. She lived in the neighborhood until 1993, protecting the children and providing network of clinics and schools.¹⁷⁹

However, it was Bishop Samuel, the Bishop of Social and Ecumenical Services of the Coptic Orthodox Church who managed to legally form a non-profit organization to organize them for community action. In mid-1970s, the Association of Garbage Collectors for Development (AGCCD), their first association, was registered as a private voluntary organization (PVO).¹⁸⁰ According to Law 32, it was a welfare organization to help the disadvantaged in the settlement, improve the quality of living, and develop the settlement. The founding members were the largest families in the neighborhood; the priest them the natural community leaders.¹⁸¹

Initially it was a religious association with religious activities. it welcomed outsiders because they can help with their connections with the government and donors.¹⁸² Yet, AGCCD was advised by EQI to register as Community Development Association (CDA) rather than welfare association. It holds annual meeting to renew one third of the board, and its general assembly consists of all the community's members who pay the annual fees to the association. AGCCD receives funds from

¹⁷⁹ Caroline Abadeer, "Informality, NGOs, and Cairo's Trash Collectors: Economic and Social Welfare Policy in the Authoritarian Egyptian State" (MA diss., University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, 2011), 38.

¹⁸⁰ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 14-16.

¹⁸¹ Elena Volpi, "Community Organization and Development," *Cairo Papers in Social Science* 19, no.4, (1996), 18-19.

¹⁸² Volpi, "Community Organization and Development," 18-19.

ministry of social Affairs and from foreign donors to pay administrators and the office's rent.¹⁸³ It adopted a community-based approach of self-help. Funds by multiple international donors for a credit program were received by the bishop to transform the residents into recyclers with the help of EQI. Machine, compactors, and grinders were provided, and residents became machine operators. A grassroots community transformation was witnessed, moving from oppressed garbage collectors into more resilient sustainable entrepreneur-like workers.¹⁸⁴ ¹⁸⁵ In 2001, AGCCD opened recycling school for older boys, in which they learn "literacy and math, computer skills, arts, advanced recycling skills, and health and industrial safety issues."¹⁸⁶ Because of the technological development and increasing culture of consumerism, they had to learn how to deal with the electronics and their valuable ingredients found by the *Zabbaleen*. They had to catch up with what was already produced to solidify their trade and invest in entrepreneurship.

AGCCD is attractive to international donors because it operates within an efficient system with cost-recovery and without any exhaustion to the municipalities' budget because of their cheap labor. EQI was the consultant for international donors and AGCCD, acting as intermediary

¹⁸³ Volpi, "Community Organization and Development," 19-20.

¹⁸⁴ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 14-16.

¹⁸⁵ CID. *The Informal Sector in Waste Recycling in Egypt*. CID Consulting, 2008.

¹⁸⁶ Petra Kuppinger, "Crushed? Cairo's Garbage Collectors And Neoliberal Urban Politics," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 36, no.2 (2014), 628. doi:10.1111/juaf.12073.

between community and donors to empower AGCCD as a development organization that represents the community and works for its interests.¹⁸⁷

In efforts to reduce dependency on donor funding, the Association for the Protection of the Environment (APE) was created to enhance community participation and achieve sustainable development. APE was registered with the ministry of Social Affairs in 1984 without religious affiliation serving Muslims and Christians. Its first project was in 1987, a composting plant. It was followed by the Rag Recycling Center in 1988. Then the Paper Recycling Project, Children's club, Infants' Nursery, Mother and Child Health Project, Adolescent Girls Health Project in 1996 among others.¹⁸⁸ It was directed by all-volunteer board of 9 members for its first 7 years. Then they trained 65 residents in the settlement to manage projects.¹⁸⁹ APE not only establishes welfare development projects, but also serves Cairo's waste management system by incorporating the informal sector.

After APE tested the separation of organic from non-organic waste, they found out multiple benefits for the community. Sorting time was reduced by 50%, and women had more time to invest in other activities. Women and children were exposed to less health risks. More non-organic waste was recovered without being contaminated.

In 2001, APE partnered with Kema and Finnida, a Finnish NGO and Finnish Aid Agency respectively, to train educated garbage collectors to spread public awareness about the importance of source segregation and make presentations to NGOs, private and government schools, and education directorates. However, these efforts were not met with success because there was

¹⁸⁷ Volpi, "Community Organization and Development," 20.

¹⁸⁸ CID, *The Informal Sector in Waste Recycling in Egypt*.

¹⁸⁹ CID, *The Informal Sector in Waste Recycling in Egypt*.

learning gap, and to introduce source segregation into the culture, you needed more partnerships and decision-making opportunities.

Later, Spirit of Youth for Environment Services (SOY) was established in 2004. Its main goal is to spread the culture of source segregation in schools and community development associations. It managed to connect transnationally with community-based recycling groups in Kenya, Nigeria, and UK.¹⁹⁰ Their goal corresponds with that of the multinationals in a way because recycling schools, for example, would reduce the re-sale of the used shampoo packages to be fraudulently refill. Donations and consultancy of the volunteers helped them to establish their projects, but their labor, capacity building, and revenues sustained these projects and enterprises. One of their greatest achievements is formalizing a labor union/syndicate for the *Zabbaleen*.

APE: Case Study of Community Action

APE is an important NGO that understood the psychosocial and cultural sides to residents' socio-economic well-being. APE planned to provide *Zabbaleen* community with sustainable development while including them in dialogues and listening to their social and economic concerns. The organization understood that the settlement represents a micro-enterprise where homes and work areas are usually the same and mobilized based on kin and origins, and that any privatization project would threaten these micro-enterprises and recycling system.

APE was composed of Egyptian volunteers who truly understood *Zabbaleen* need for sustainable development while keeping in mind their culture and socio-economic system. EQI sought APE

¹⁹⁰ CID, *The Informal Sector in Waste Recycling in Egypt*, 28.

help in loans repayment difficulties, benefiting from their technical, financial, managerial administrative expertise.

And even when APE looked to the West, they made sure they have sincere concern for the poor, respect for the culture, and justice for the marginalized¹⁹¹. They also succeeded because they were not dependent on the exploitative rich blocks who provide fund but fail to address the unfair system; in fact, they developed their capacity to sustain themselves. They even developed their new leaders who advocated their community in the educated urban areas.¹⁹²

APE's projects focused on three dimensions: business, development, and school. The business dimension focuses on the production of goods, recycling, accumulation of capital, and entrepreneurship. The development dimension deals with the promises of neoliberalism as granting equal chances and equal access to resources, welfare, better lives, and empowerment. And the School dimension deals with investment in human capital which would generate higher income in the future and more profit.¹⁹³

APE illustrates the "three pillars of sustainability:" Economic, Environmental, and Social. APE proposes stakeholder approach to the sustainable development of inner poor areas while advocating radical policy action and collaborative planning for consolidating bottom-up urban governance. It offers a partnership between community-based groups, NGOs, local authorities and planners that would support urban poor's sustainable initiatives to improve their housing standards and basic services. Unlike in 1982, in 1992 they had two schools (Gabal elMokattam school built

¹⁹¹ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 90.

¹⁹² Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*.

¹⁹³ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 50.

in 1984 by sister Emmanuel and al-Gabarti school built in 1987 by Ms. Susane Mubarak), three outpatient clinics, three non-profit associations, three churches, two mosques, three pre-schools, a recreational center, scores of literacy classes, piped-in water for the majority of the settlement, and a sewer system of sorts.¹⁹⁴ And now, it is considered one of the world's greenest waste-management system and a rare entrepreneurial success story in Egypt.¹⁹⁵ In 1992 Rio Earth Summit, this success "went further and sought to project the *Zabbaleen*'s program as a model of recycling garbage to be encouraged in other Third World cities such as Manila and Mumbai."¹⁹⁶

APE has four-layered bureaucracy. At the top, there is the Board of trustees (9 members) who offer a middle-class insight on the community's performance. Then there are three committees below: compost committee, Rug weaving/patchwork committee (2 board members, 3 volunteers in patchwork project, and project officer committee), and health and development committee. Under the rug weaving/patchwork committee, there is the project officer committee that consists of six project officers, one board member, and two literacy instructors. And at the bottom, there are the people who are rug weavers, patchwork quilters, cleaning staff, drivers, and staff.¹⁹⁷

In 1982, the streets and pigsties were used as latrines. Men usually shovel manure, but families that couldn't do it; they call a merchant who would clean the pigsties in return for a 3 months'

¹⁹⁴ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 92.

¹⁹⁵ Itziar Aguirre, "Cairo's 'Zabaleen' Garbage Collectors: Egypt's Diamond in the Rough." *Global Risks Insights*, 12 June 2015.

¹⁹⁶ Fahmi and Sutton, "Cairo's Zabaleen garbage recyclers: Multi-nationals' takeover and state relocation plans," 810.

¹⁹⁷ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 44.

worth of manure that would be sold to rural farmers.¹⁹⁸ The first project was the organic compost that was came into place with the help of EQI and Soeur Emmanuelle and resulted in the best composts in Egypt. *Zabbaleen* were encouraged to clean their pigsties and deposit the manure in APE were the composting machines refine them. Then they are sold to farmers.¹⁹⁹

Initially APE projects targeted girls whose age range from 10 to 16 and who conform to minimum standards (health and height). They have certain admission questions/criteria: Do you live in the neighborhood? Do you go to school? Do you still go out on the garbage route? Do you sort garbage manually? Do you go out on the streets of Cairo on foot with a sack to forage for plastic in the big municipal bins? Is your father alive? How many gown-up brothers do you have? How large is your family do you own any machines for recycling? these questions are indicators of oppression, economic need, level of income, and privilege.²⁰⁰

Later, after the organization gained the community's trust, the applicants were expanded to include married women too. They included married women for a developmental purpose. They wanted to properly prepare mothers as care-providers for their children and siblings and fix (through dialogue with them) some social family problems, such as: female circumcision, illiteracy, hygiene, etc.

APE provided job opportunities for girls with adequate incomes, so their families would not disagree on allowing them to continue their education by attending their classes (for free) in the afternoon. APE recognized that many girls had no birth certificates that would deny formal

¹⁹⁸ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*.

¹⁹⁹ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 20.

²⁰⁰ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 27-28.

schooling was that.²⁰¹ APE strongly worked on women illiteracy eradication, and they succeeded. Some girls succeeded in finishing their university's Bachelors, and even worked in APE administration with monthly salaries. They also built a pre-school with playground for children, so mothers can leave them in it and focus on work.

When I was in APE, I met Lady D who was, like most of the residents, from Upper Egypt. She married in 1999, and then she finished her training with APE that provided her with eradication of poverty classes and allowed her to finish her preparatory education while she was pregnant in her fourth child. It was her husband who stopped her from pursuing her education because he did not want her to surpass him, and he could not pursue higher level of education because of his work load. However, he told me "APE further provides our children with lessons at night as a second school that is even better than the first."

APE targets women for employment, and few men. Workers take their days off on Fridays and Sundays. Usually their operating hours are from 8:00 am to 3:30 pm. APE hires between 800 to 1000 women in the organization itself and 120 women are working from home. They sell their products in Asfour El-Nile, Omar Afendi, and other upper-class outlets in Maadi, Zamalek, North Coast (Ghazala-Marassi-Diplomacien), and Gouna.

Women work in different areas. They work in paper recycling, to which The American University in Cairo donate their papers. First Stage of recycling papers is making sure that the papers do not contain any sharp metal objects. Then they weight the papers in kilos in the machine that shreds and cuts the papers. To change the colors of the papers, they use natural ingredients and herbs without using any chemicals. The papers then are turned into dough that are made into different

²⁰¹ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 27.

layers, and later they are pressed in a machine and left to dry. Finally, they transform them into gift boxes and other products.

Women also work in Rugs manufacture and patchwork factories. They work in good working conditions in clean rooms. The more complicated products they produce, the more time they take in training. Therefore, the training may range from one to three months. They are offered the warp and the loom for free as long as their productions come back to the center for marketing. The weavers are then refunded upon merit for their rugs, which allow them to save money to purchase more warp and keep producing. However, the provision of materials for free created a leaking for the finances of the project because there is a market for rugs in the neighborhood, so women were selling some rugs independently in the neighborhood. Therefore, women had to save to pay for the warp's cost to pay back to APE and maintain the replicability of the project to allow for justice to other women to benefit.²⁰²

When I asked lady D how long did it take you to make these patchwork products? She told me “It is a hobby. if you want to learn it, you will be fast, but if it's for money, learning will not be as fast. I love learning new designs. I knew how to draw and use sewing machine since I was in school. Then I learned this craft out of love unlike my mother who did not have any knowledge or love for it. However, she still produces good work. But I consider patchwork products are pieces of art. And I will not work in rugs because I will do what I love.”

All the other waste that APE could not make use of are melted down for recycling and sold for profit to merchants or the formal sector by informal agreements negotiated between *el-Zabbaleen* and the state. The filtration and separation processes are usually done outside APE by *Zabbaleen*

²⁰² Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 81

themselves. Through these activities, APE managed to be financially self-sufficient, but for health services they apply for funds from specialized international organizations and governmental institutions in Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, France, and Finland. Arab and Asian countries do not provide much assistance. APE hires special accountant for these funds. APE medically checked-up the workers in *Zabbaleen* community for Virus-C, Anemia, and Trachoma, and offered them medication and cure. APE also provides special care for children and newly-born babies. According to my interlocutors, the received funds go to education and health for continuity and sustainability of the projects. They provide many medical activities, such as virus C awareness campaigns and consistent doctors' visits. However, some of the ladies I interviewed told me that "now they do not necessarily provide the cure for virus C, but they help us until we receive it from the government." Moreover, it is expected that there will be new health project for tumors. The Egyptian governments tend to supervise APE funds closely. APE is required to have many permissions from the state before they receive their funds. And sometimes the state does not cooperate or refuse delivering the fund to APE after the state receives it from the donor.

The community of women in APE is heterogeneous. APE cuts across religious lines, so the community is not only limited to the Christian community, but their products are somehow inspired by the Christian tradition, so their products are designed into pigs, Christmas trees, etc. They tend to update their products in style and shape. They get the new models from the volunteers. APE maintains strict quality standards for products. APE usually targets the upper class as customers because their purchasing power is not affected by recessions, their taste appreciates handmade products and natural fibers, and consumption patterns guaranteed minimum level of

sales.²⁰³ They award those who come up with new ideas. Their products are somehow relatively expensive, but money goes to education and community development. The prices in APE are usually one third of that of their outlets in el Gouna. They have new marketing and advertising strategies with the help of the donors, such as their Facebook page, *Zabbaleen Art*. Donors tend to belong to the upper class who have the tools to market and mobilize for them. For example, during Mubarak, *EL-Zabbaleen* of Torra were about to be relocated, but Yousria Louza, the mother of Naguib Sawiris, intervened and helped in developing the area.

APE aims at empowering the residents by making bi-monthly Monday noontime parties, in which they can share all of their concerns, such as production matters, wages and loan repayment issues, field trips, sales events, prizes and incentives, graduation class, announcements of social events (engagements, weddings, funerals, births, etc.), crisis management, and health and socio-dramas, puppet theater, learning by doing activity, etc.²⁰⁴

The Role of Support Groups

APE provides a system where the rich and poor, the literate and the illiterate work together for better world and lives. It aims at serving the poorest of the poor. Because the project has an element of uncertainty, APE decided to free themselves from the traditional western funding and depend more on the Egyptian culture of religion (zakat) that offered help for millions of poor without the paralyzing constraints of the western donors.²⁰⁵ From a western perspective, this project like the kinship system of feudal and rural Egypt, is a personalist system, which means unprofessional and

²⁰³ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 71

²⁰⁴ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 71

²⁰⁵ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 14-16.

unsustainable lacking competence, fairness, and sustainability because after the persons who are responsible die, how the system would continue? And how can we guarantee fairness and merit? But Laila Iskandar, an old supporter and benchmark for *Zabbaleen*, responds to that stating “such thinking failed to take into account that in Egypt, a culture that had survived on persons handing over to persons, the unbroken chain, had survived well over 5,000 years- longer than any system known in the technologically advanced world. And that if that system had had its own faults, then what system in the west or elsewhere that had proved to be truly efficient and unbiased could be transferred to a different culture?.”²⁰⁶

Board of trustees who intervene on behalf of the *Zabbaleen* with the government and provide the strategic plan, introduced project members to their friends and relatives who owned textile and ready-made garment factories. To give zakat/alms in form of cloth and rags. (Now, cloths and materials are bought from the factories of 6th October and 10th of Ramadan). Once APE obtained 30 looms from a closing factory. They received donations of cabinets, desks, books, catalogs for new designs, chairs, etc. Embassies and women’s groups donated lots of materials. Donations took form of services as well, such as printing brochures for the projects, shipping discounts from Airline companies.²⁰⁷ Many support groups provided them with time, expertise, and feeling, which is different from empathy. Feelings are something that *Zabbaleen* have been missing for so long, being oppressed and dumped as the rubbish they collect. These support groups uplifted them more than any external donor did.

²⁰⁶ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 24.

²⁰⁷ Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 26.

Their support groups made trading partners with Switzerland, France, England, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, USA and others non-profit trading organizations that lack arrogance; rather they made respectful partnership between rich and poor nations, eliminating middlemen and giving fair prices.²⁰⁸

Among those supporters is Laila Iskandar. She helped in the creation of many associations and was appointed as minister of Environment in 2013 then minister of urban Renewal and Informal Settlement in 2014, which revealed the new positive orientation towards *Zabbaleen*, but unfortunately, she left office very soon. She once said: “Over the years the *Zabbaleen* have created an efficient ecosystem that is both viable and profitable, with a recycling capacity of almost 100 percent. It provides work for women and young people who are the first to suffer from Egypt’s unemployment. We need to use this local organization,”²⁰⁹ meaning not to sideline them.

Voices of the People

When I visited APE, I met a few interesting workers. when I entered the Patchwork section, there was lady H who was joking with her boss that she will not make any other interviews, so he should better leave her alone. I entered the room asking if I can watch them working, and they welcomingly agreed. The ladies were already trained. They were divided between “*Setat montgeen*” (producers from home coming to APE to take materials or deliver products and receive money) and full-time employees (who come to APE every day). There were two twins sixteen years-old girls working with their mum. They were taking cloth and working from home while

²⁰⁸ 74-75 Iskandar, *Mokattam Garbage Village*, 74-75.

²⁰⁹ Aguirre, "Cairo's 'Zabaleen' Garbage Collectors: Egypt's Diamond in the Rough."

studying. Some of them were complaining that they came three times to receive new assignments in vain. Some come from farther areas in the neighborhood and have to come on foot.

Among them was lady S who was coming to submit products and receive new designs despite her injured hand. she is from the neighborhood and her products are remarkably good. Then she married and moved to shobra with her husband. According to APE rules, APE serves primarily residents of the settlement, yet her boss loved the quality of her products, so she allowed her to resume work with them. She takes microbus from shobra, and then walks on her foot to APE. Since she married, she does not come to the neighborhood frequently. Compared to living in Shubra, she tells “unlike in Shobra, here in *Zaraib* (the street where *Zabbaleen* live) everything is closed by 10 or 11 Pm. They sleep early because they have to work by 3:00 am. Only the reckless youth who woke-up after 11:00 pm without job or anything to do, sitting on coffeeshops. Living in Shobra is good where there is no garbage everywhere.” Then she was interrupted by her friend who said that “garbage is not a problem, but what is disturbing is the smell of plastic heating/recycling”.

And then I witnessed a group of ladies working on a beautiful bed cover. They told me that they were working on a special order by a French lady who wanted a bed cover made of her children’s t-shirts. They were keen on satisfying her and appreciating her memories (the t-shirts). However, they told me that “we appreciate such special order, and we try to satisfy customers, but sometimes they limit us to a certain order or a design for the materials. When we are left the freedom of creativity, we produce the best, but when we are limited to a specific design for the t-shirts for example, it is harder.” And she continues “our work is not easy. We work for hours on very punctual stitches, especially those of the Islamic drawings, without any disruption, so our sights

have been negatively affected. As you see all of us are wearing glasses. I do not want my daughter to work with me.”

My interlocutors agreed that earlier, girls were not supposed to go out of home except for helping their fathers in garbage collection. Education was only offered to boys in 1970s-1980s if possible. Now education is offered to both sexes, and they work in all occupations. They referred to people from their settlement who worked in maritime navigation, business, among others.

Only then when lady H, the mother of the twins, approached me and said that the day before, she was giving an interview to *el-Watan* newspaper. After the journalist finished with her, she asked what her university degree is? because Lady H was a well-informed good public speaker, so the journalist expected her to be a university degree holder although she only received education till middle school, but she developed herself and her skills. She learned the craft from her mum who was an early comer to the neighborhood. She was a full-time APE employee as well, yet she tells me, “the income generated from my products is what actually counts, not my full-time job.” She continues “working in *Zaraib* is very profitable. They can make gold out of trash. If a child collects some plastic bags from streets, they get to have a business, especially if he is genuinely smart.”

When I asked where do you prefer to work in *zaraib* or APE? She told me “It is more profitable to work on my own in *Zaraib*, but it depends on the occupation of the husbands and the ownership of the properties (houses and machines). I am renting a house to live in, so I do not have a place to sort in. In addition, my husband is an employee and he does not collect garbage.” She was not the only one to complain about her economic need.

Lady E, besides her work in APE, she informally provides cosmetic services for her female colleagues in APE. The prices of her services range from EGP10 to EGP20. Lady E is a thirty-two

years-old mother who only moved to the neighborhood when she got married. She wanted her children to pursue their education until they earn university bachelors and go out of the settlement to work outside. She tells me that “we need to increase our income, but because of our day routine, we do not have enough time to work in a second job. When we finish work, we only have time to cook and take care of children.” On the other hand, the men that I interviewed in APE managed to have other jobs outside APE. For example, Mr. S who was among the few male workers in APE managed to have a second job, a plumber.

Mr. B who was born in 1973 in Embaba and then was shortly relocated with his family to Muqattam was hired in APE because he was talented in drawing, creating beautiful designs for the patchwork section. He further developed himself and learned English. Then he started to give tours about APE and its goals to tourists in English. However, he showed regret that he continued with the association due to its limited salary, EGP 2000. He said that he had to involve in other businesses, so he and his family of a wife and four kids could live properly. He opened a bazar next to the church where he sells APE products.

When I asked them if they receive help from the church. They told me, “yes, the church still helps them, but those who are in desperate need. We are better off than many others. We work; we have hands”. My interlocutors emphasize on the role of the church saying, “nothing works without father Samaan. For example, when the rock fell from the Muqattam mountain, and we were threatened of relocation, especially after the relocation of people in Dewia’, he called his network of businessmen who intervened.” The Church is very important for them; it is not only a relation of receiving, rather of giving as well. Recently the church was indebted because of new constructions. So, residents started donating with all they can. During a mass, a married woman donated her wedding ring, and people returned it to her. Another time father Samaan was asking

people to donate, so they would make silver and gold utensils for communion. One lady donated with ½ kilo of silver from her house kits, and some men were wearing silver necklaces that they donated as well. Lady H told me that father Samaan brings pride for us. Once he said, "we are cleaners, and without me the *Zabbal* taking out your garbage, you would sink in dirt."

When I was there, I met an American tourist who came to the settlement thirty-five years earlier when he was severely suffering from medical and personal issues for so long, and when he visited the church and father Samaan, a "miracle" happened as they express changing his life completely, and he recovered. Since then, he is used to visiting the settlement consistently.

When I asked my interlocutors if they wish to move outside the settlement, all of them denied. Some expressed material reasons while other expressed emotional ones. Mr. S told me that "I do not want to leave the neighborhood because my job is here, and the settlement has many advantages. It is mid-town, and I do not have to take many transportations to reach my destinations." Lady H said, "Here it is safer despite everything. We all know each other very well, so I am not worried on my kids. You can walk around 2:00 am, and it is still safe at least at the place I am living in." Another lady told me prices here are cheaper than outside. For example, according to her "one kilo of '*Balady*' Meat worth EGP130, and the cattle is slaughtered in front of us guaranteeing what we are eating. I once tried the meat provided by the government, and it is worse than the Brazilian (not good quality)." Even Lady S who is living in Shobra and seemed to dislike the settlement now tells me, "despite all the odds, I miss the settlement and going out with my friends to the church."

Chapter 6

Unequal Relations within the Settlement

In the last two chapters, I have been analyzing the coping strategies of the residents of the settlement. However, the residents face many inequalities and fail to be empowered enough, and this chapter is primarily dedicated to analyzing the reasons of the inequalities that arise from within the settlement and how they unfold.

Income Gap Repercussions and Lack of transparency

The labor in the settlement is divided into two: labor in garbage business (*Zaraib*) and labor in non-garbage sector that includes blue collar and sometimes even white-collar jobs for the young generations. For *Zabbaleen* who work in *Zaraib*, the labor is divided into two as well: those who work in their houses/microenterprises and those who work for a rich enterprise owner.

For those who work for a rich business-owner, the division of labor in the village resembles that of the capitalist projects. Collection of garbage, sorting of garbage, and disposal of garbage are done by the cheap labor, which feeds into capital accumulation by the relative bourgeoisie of the village (those who owns the business). Even though residents receive health care, education, and financial help by the NGOs (not as compensation for work), the cycle of marginalization is not interrupted, and they are still stuck into many hardships and health hazards. The profit generated from the sale of recyclables is not reflected into the wages of the labor. There are different classes in the settlement and income gaps between the residents. Labor in the recycling industry receive the highest wages while labor in garbage collection and transportation receive the lowest wages.²¹⁰

Once you enter the settlement, you find a few good-looking villas and housing buildings. One of

²¹⁰ Fahmi, 158.

them is for the syndicate's head who holds a UN diplomat passport and lives in a fancy spacious villa full of embalmed animals and rare birds with a private pool.²¹¹ There are also not only trucks, but also private cars.

Not all *Zabbaleen* are subject to disease equally. The wealthiest people do not touch garbage; they rather control the sale of glass and recycled facilities, accumulating huge profit. The syndicate head who belongs to a rich family does not touch garbage like other *Zabbaleen*.²¹² One poor *Zabbal* says that they live in very poor conditions like animals, but he thought that the bacteria and viruses that they are constantly subject to rather give them immunity than disease.²¹³ According to a lady whom I interviewed, "the syndicate does not help; it only exists by name. It is rather a show, in which he occasionally appears on TV calling for the *Zabbaleen* rights. He lives in a fancy villa at the very beginning of the neighborhood."

The poorer *Zabbaleen* are subject to work-related illnesses and injuries with no access to health care or hygiene. Furthermore, for some, they even have very limited access to water to wash up. It is very hard to have protective measure during their work unless this might affect the profitability

²¹¹ Mohamed elSaeed, «نقيب «الزبالين» في مصر... يحمل «جواز سفر دبلوماسياً»», *Al-Rai Media*, June 8, 2017, Accessed November 11, 2018.

²¹² *Zabbaleen: Trash Town. A whole community in Egypt that lives on rubbish* (RT Documentary, 2016), accessed February 22, 2018.

²¹³ *Zabbaleen: Trash Town. A whole community in Egypt that lives on rubbish*.

of their enterprises. In addition, the fact that their unregistered labor is in informal sector makes them liable to exploitation easily.²¹⁴

Despite their efforts to sustain and empower themselves, the Muqattam Village still fail to be empowered enough and fail to resolve the unequal power relations within the community itself. According to Elena Vopli's ethnographic work, residents think that poor cannot be the leaders of the settlements because they can easily be bribed, and rich people are not sympathetic enough with the poorest at the bottom.²¹⁵ This means that they lack real representation for the poor's interests even inside their community. AGCCD fails to safeguard the poor garbage collector's interests against other groups involved in the economic activity. For example, AGCCD abstained from addressing the *Zabbaleen*'s issue of not receiving enough money from the *wahiyas* as part of the 1989 agreement.²¹⁶ This issue kept unresolved for long because the poor lack a real representation. There is a problem of transparency in the settlement. In most situations, the poor *Zabbaleen* lack any knowledge on relevant matters, and there is high-level of reservation in passing information to them. As a result, trust issues erupted in the settlement. The system lacks transparency. As Krueger was addressing question of development and the terms of trade,²¹⁷ people cannot develop

²¹⁴ Gunsilius, 24.

²¹⁵ Volpi, 35.

²¹⁶ Volpi, 33.

²¹⁷ A.O. Krueger, *Political economy of policy reform in developing countries* (MIT press, 2002), <http://lib.aucegypt.edu/search~S2?/aKrueger+Anne+/akrueger+anne/1%2C1%2C53%2CB/frame&FF=akrueger+anne+o&18%2C%2C53>.

themselves because they do not have access to capital. Therefore, trade do not result in accumulation for everybody.

The knowledge on the terms of the contract and the trade are usually confined to the middlemen/rich business-owner/*Moallemeen* on one hand and the local authorities/ internal business groups/ big factories.²¹⁸ Poor *Zabbaleen* also usually face a problem of access to capital, which prohibits social mobility for many. Except for NGOs funds and loans, the number of lending institutions is limited because they do not have enough information, education, or collaterals to enter the formal markets.²¹⁹ “As a result, the level of organization is surprisingly low (2,5%), given the long history of the *Zabbaleen* in waste management and ongoing threats to their access to materials and clients.”²²⁰

Many informal leaders assume control to resolve internal conflicts, and they usually acquired their authority from their economic resources. They use their asset to distribute benefits to the people in conflict coming to him for “*sulh*,” so they pay from his money to give compromise to the stakeholders to compromise on the issue.²²¹ Political and social participation as leaders derive from heir vertical relation with those in power. Many would accuse AGCCD of corruption and non-representativeness, and people join them to pursue their interests regardless of the poor. However, the residents prefer people from their trade to be in powerful positions because their interests would most likely correspond to the those of the masses in the settlement, and this might result in the

²¹⁸ CID, 26.

²¹⁹ CID, 26.

²²⁰ Gunsilius, 24.

²²¹ Volpi, 34-35.

minimalist accountable relationship built on trust and recognition between the relatively richer leaders and the masses.²²² As a result, the poor lack control over the resources and regulations, disempowering the poor.²²³

APE projects that focus on youth education and empowering the most vulnerable usually allow many residents to develop themselves to be represented as the educated youth leader for the community. However, they work on a semi-volunteer basis, and many of them stopped working into garbage, which renders their leadership relatively weak compared to the other community leaders who work in garbage. According to one educated youth leader, many are still marginalized and poor because AGCCD prefers to serve the rich in the community. And on the elections of the AGCCD board, he says he never elected anyone because he does not belong to the rich families. His father is a relatively poor *Zabbal*, which means that he would never have the chance to vote for the candidate who would represent his family's interests in the board.²²⁴

APE horizontal relations provide more representation for the residents. Sometimes they chose residents to represent them abroad, and this increases awareness of possibilities for the residents and challenges EQI choice of AGCCD as their main interlocutor.²²⁵

According to a relatively rich resident garbage collector who used to be ex-member of the AGCCD, there is no transparency over the budget of the AGCCD.²²⁶ There is also an antagonistic

²²² Volpi, 34-35.

²²³ Volpi, 36.

²²⁴ Volpi, 36.

²²⁵ Volpi, 37.

²²⁶ Volpi, 35.

relationship between AGCCD and APE that tends to prevent activities for the *Zabbaleen*'s self-sustainability and unity, yet sometimes this antagonism allows for more resources to the settlement and projects.²²⁷ Many conflicts have been happening between AGCCD and APE regarding recycling activities. They are rather conflicts of business interests than conflicts for supporting the community.²²⁸

Moreover, poor *Zabbaleen* faces a physical and cultural Stigma. On one hand, Cairenes prefer the garbage-collectors' services, collecting their garbage from their doorsteps, yet they might resent *Zabbaleen*'s stained appearance and trucks. The job itself is stigmatized as dirty and inappropriate for the educated. Poor *Zabbaleen* face this stigma not only from outsiders, but also from insiders who are relatively richer or non-*Zaraib* workers.

Three interviewees stressed on an important point. They stated that the more the rich accumulates money, the more crimes and violence committed by the rich increase in the settlement specially after 2011 uprisings and the availability of more weapons. One young blue-collar interviewee said that "Money plays an important role in crime rate, and they love to spend the money in 'hals'." Moreover, he continues "people here hate to give people their dues. they love to be tricked. They would negotiate for long to lower the price of your labor, but if you cheated and lied asking for higher prices for the materials, they would give you the money right away. However, I hate to generalize. Some people are good."

²²⁷ Volpi, 32.

²²⁸ Fahmi, 169.

Exclusion by middlemen

Earlier, Middlemen who have licenses to collect garbage were the *Zabbaleen*'s agents to deal with the governments and formal sector. There are many middlemen in the business of garbage. Usually middlemen who have licenses and can make agreements with large industries or international businesses hire the collectors, exploit them, and give them very cheap wages while they accumulate huge profits.²²⁹ *Wahiyas* fell in the category of the middlemen. Therefore, *Zabbaleen* had to pay them for the garbage as a commodity. Therefore, in theory *Zabbaleen* are engaged into a capitalist mode of production, in which they have to maintain their relationships with *Wahiyas* (from whom they buy their materials) and businessmen or entrepreneurs (to whom they sell their production) and at the same time perform their labor to produce to accumulate capital.

As a result of limited knowledge, poor *Zabbaleen* lack prices and market information. Middlemen have an advantage, which provides them with communication with other markets. As a result, poor *Zabbaleen* fail to have a sustained market, which limits their attractiveness to the formal sector and increases their vulnerability if middlemen decided not to distribute work for them.²³⁰ Moreover, recycling SMEs in the settlements have been suffering from multiple hardships to receive licenses from the local municipalities, so they have been exploited by the middlemen who are more privileged because they have licenses (so they can issue receipts and invoices), storages, machines, and capital. Middlemen can sell the sorted products without even adding value with higher prices

²²⁹ CID, 24.

²³⁰ CID, 27.

because they are the link between the formal sector and informal recycler.²³¹ In addition, “exporting recyclers from among the informal sector have been hit with a tax imposed on waste which has not enjoyed value, yet the interpretation of the law at local level has obstructed their exporting activities.”²³² This happened because they did not have any representation or consultation with the tax policy -makers.

According to an interview, when an informal microenterprise owner attempted to make a PET deal with a Chinese recycling enterprise, he narrates “the government levied an export tax of EGP1,600, on each ton of pressed PET. This increased the Chinese firm’s input costs by around 50%, which forced it to end its business in Egypt. It took about ten months to liquidate the firm and for the informal microenterprise to recoup its earnings.”²³³ Afterwards, he decided he would never directly deal with other formal sector contractors unless he formalized his enterprise to issue receipts and invoices. And although middlemen might protect them from going through this Huddle, many still view them as exploiters.

Gender inequalities

Any of the previously mentioned threats impacts women in the community more than men because women can find more jobs and has a high percentage in the informal sector. Moreover, even with

²³¹ Nermin Abdel Gelil, "Understanding Informality: A cost-benefit analysis of Recycling Microenterprises in Manshiet Nasser," 2012, accessed Novemebr 5, 2018.

²³² CID, 51.

²³³ Gelil, 25.

the positive developments that might be witnessed in the informal sector, women still have different experiences. Higher wages would be an incentive for men to take women's places.²³⁴

In formal valorization sector, women are less hired while in the informal sector women play crucial role in waste management. Women do not participate in formal collection of garbage; they rather work in informal activities. In the informal valorization sector, they sort in community-based enterprises and family-owned business, trade materials, or initiate a community-based enterprise. Since sorting is usually the jobs of women and girls, they are more likely to suffer from cuts and infections from sharp materials, broken glasses, and hospital wastes that are not properly disposed. Many women state that the development programs fail to address their day to day problems.²³⁵ In fact, they state that the programs tend to reduce their quality of life and increase their workload.

However, they tend to suffer from very muscle energy exhaustive work and poor conditions with no separate wages for their labor.²³⁶ Women are charged with large number of duties. They have to cook, clean the house, raise the children, feed the pigs, sort the garbage, serve meals for family members, and might participate in their sale while men only collect the garbage and sell them.²³⁷ Yet, women labor is still perceived as unproductive and under-valued especially when it comes to their domestic housework labor. In fact, women are the secret behind the success of the

²³⁴ Gunsilius, 29.

²³⁵ Doaa Abdel Motaal, "Women at the Muqattam Settlement," *Cairo Papers in Social Science* 19, no. 4 (1996): 89-99.

²³⁶ Gunsilius, 23.

²³⁷ Motaal, 78.

microenterprises. Because of their enriched experience, they enjoy greater speed in sorting than men do and with better quality, which encourages buyers to buy more from their products. Therefore, they sell more quantities with higher revenues, which ends up with a positive environment impact for the whole country.²³⁸

However, the upward social mobility remains dependent on men. For example, a woman stated that despite the increased sorted quantities and higher revenues, her husband did not increase her weekly allowances even though she was the one who was over-worked. She said that she managed to keep the house going through ‘*gameayat*’ (credit circles).²³⁹ She also stated that he used to spend all the revenue on drugs and alcoholics²⁴⁰ with no upward social mobility, so her labor was wasted without any compensation. Her life became even worse when her husband was conscripted for military. Without her husband it was difficult no garbage is collected. She had to apply for a loan from the female headed household project in the settlement and depend on the church for help.²⁴¹ Another lady was luckier than the former because her husband was smarter and more friendly with her, so they succeeded in achieving upward social mobility.²⁴²

Women occupation is defined by her husband’s occupation and social status. According to my interlocutors, even if it is more prosperous to work in garbage for the women, but their husbands do not work in *Zaraib*, then women could not work in *zaraib*.

²³⁸ Motaal, 90.

²³⁹ Motaal, 90.

²⁴⁰ Motaal, 90.

²⁴¹ Motaal, 91.

²⁴² Motaal, 99.

Women also do not have feasible access to the bases of social power or representation.²⁴³ For example, there are no women in AGCCD board. Generally, men are allocated more resources than women.²⁴⁴ There is a male dominance and strong patriarchal system in the community. Even the health education that AGCCD provides for women was criticized by the women in community. One lady said that the health education that AGCCD teaches is not applicable on their life style.²⁴⁵ Furthermore, women are more likely to suffer from malnourishment because they tend to eat after men who would consume most of the protein and rich food, so they eat the leftover.²⁴⁶

In women-headed households or families, in which women receive income, women are limited to the lower-earning activities. As a result, their income is lower than that of men even though they might be performing the same job, such as itinerant waste buying. Furthermore, studies show that women are paid less for the materials they sell to the buyers and merchants because of their gender.²⁴⁷ However, I was told a different story by my interlocutors. I was told that buyers/traders fear women who sell them the materials because they are more likely to tell each other in their circles, and if the trader had a negative reputation through women's word of mouth, women would boycott this trader.

The women whom I interviewed agreed that men in the settlement have closed mindset, especially when it comes to marriage and personal life. One-woman interviewee told me, “*Zabbaleen* earn

²⁴³ Motaal, 65.

²⁴⁴ Motaal, 65.

²⁴⁵ Motaal, 98.

²⁴⁶ Motaal, 80.

²⁴⁷ Gunsilius, 24.

good, but they have certain mindset. Whoever they marry they will work in *zaraib*. Even if she is a doctor, he will make her work in garbage. I don't mind working in anything even sweeping, but because I did not work in these conditions before. My father was working in factory, so I am used to dealing with decent people.”

Mother in laws is one manifestation of how men are close-minded. Mothers in law tend to be a good reason for the fights between the married couple because they have to marry in a family house. Even if the wife is obedient, but her mother in law thinks differently, then husband will have to punish his wife. Mother in laws, despite being women, are another reason for suffering for women. The same findings were found in another study.²⁴⁸

Lady D told me that she wants to let her girl be free and decide for her life. My interlocutors generally showed their desire for having Better lives for their girls because they themselves were forced onto many things from school to home to marriage, yet they asserted that “the following generations are different than us. Our younger sisters and daughters can dress the way they prefer, but there is a limit.”

Sexual harassment, especially verbal, is one of the challenges for women in the neighborhood, as is the case in most Egyptian districts whether formal or informal. Interviewed women told me that sexual harassment exists in areas more than others in the settlement. One told me, “In events such as weddings where women attend as well-dressed with good hair, boys and men take many pictures of them, and the next day women's pictures are on everybody's mobile phones.” Some

²⁴⁸ Motaal, 87-89.

interviewees referred the problem of sexual harassment to lack of education, but harassers are not only limited to the uneducated.

Positive implications for Inequalities

Although, the settlement has been suffering from the repercussions of the different forms of inequalities for long, these forms of inequalities in the community might still have some positive implications for the community. The first benefit is that it allows for organizational capacity (even if the poor are under-represented). For example, despite its rich-oriented interests, in many cases, AGCCD managed to protect the garbage collectors' interests, such as with the *Rabta-Gamiya* agreement of 1989 that organizes the labor between the *Wahiya* and the garbage collectors after the state modernizing policies and the mechanization of the process.²⁴⁹

The community leaders in organizations such as AGCCD assume their role firmly to organize the struggle of the poor and empower them even if they are being selective in the cases that would benefit both the rich and the poor. AGCCD succeeded in strengthening *Zabbaleen* capacity by delaying many actions by external authorities that would pose a threat to the trade. They have a good negotiation capacity with the local authorities, municipalities, community organizations, and local NGOs. Therefore, they have the tools to address the issues of the settlement such as poverty alleviation, access to public service, and land tenure, attempting to find solutions and flexible measures.²⁵⁰ One interviewee told me, “despite all of their odds, if something is concerned with the garbage business, they can raise it well to the officials and even the council of ministers.”

²⁴⁹ Volpi, 33.

²⁵⁰ Fahmi, 170.

An example of their positive organizational action happened after Al-Azhar Park had opened and construction had started in Cairo Financial Center. The nearby land to the Garbage Village in Muqattam became very attractive for the investors. Accordingly, the government tried to relocate the community to Qattameya that is 25 kilometers outside Cairo; however, this posed a serious logistical issue for *Zabbaleen* who will have to travel to Qattameya, then followed by their wives and children to sort.^{251 252} Therefore, by 2004, there was a Privatization programme and relocation efforts by the government. According to official planner at the Ministry of Housing, Utilities, and Urban Communities (MHUUC), "...the new settlements will be equipped with water supply and sanitation systems, road networks, open spaces, public facilities, telecommunication services and environmentally friendly workshops. Residents will be provided with a soft loan, 90 per cent of which is required to be paid back over 40 years, giving the residents a sense of ownership."²⁵³

This program created different reactions from the stakeholder. The most supportive of the poor *Zabbaleen* who were very reluctant to the program were AGCCD. What united AGCCD with poor *Zabbaleen* is the fear on their garbage trade. Despite their living and residency in the settlement, they did not fear resettlement because they could afford to relocate to other areas in central Cairo because of the upward social mobility.²⁵⁴ However, AGCCD leaders strongly disagreed on the programme and the multinationals deals because they feared economic loss in their business. On the other hand, *wahiyas* were pragmatically favoring the multinationals because they expected

²⁵¹ Kuppinger, 628.

²⁵² Fahmi and Sutton, 2010.

²⁵³ Fahmi, 159.

²⁵⁴ Fahmi, 164.

future partnerships with the multinational companies and more opportunities.²⁵⁵ local NGOs including APE were expecting positive results in terms of institutional learning, achieving environmental awareness, generation of additional funds, developing credible programs, coordinated action, and educational opportunities. On the other hand, CID had a more negative view in terms of jobs losses, security of tenure, and liaising with local authorities, yet they expected more public facilities and public awareness, which might lead to more networking opportunities and cooperation with local community.²⁵⁶ However, it was AGCCD and their support groups who had the upper hand in delaying and stopping the eviction plan.

Second benefit of inequalities is the creation of jobs. “Though they have been involved in garbage collection for decades, the augmentation of socioeconomic divides is what continues to create a source of income for them.”²⁵⁷ The existence of income difference is what allows for job creation for the poor excluded *Zabbaleen* who cannot afford to work on his own or need better jobs with better wages in recycling enterprises, trickle-down effect. “In July 2000, there were 228 micro and small scale recycling enterprises in the Muqattam settlement that employed 1435 individuals from various communities. In 1996, there were 163 workshops that employed 1002 workers. The recycling workshops in the area created approximately 30% new job opportunities during this four-year period.”²⁵⁸ therefore, job creation stands as very important positive feature of inequalities in the settlement. “The livelihoods of the vast numbers of traditional waste collectors/recyclers

²⁵⁵ Fahmi, 164.

²⁵⁶ Fahmi, 165.

²⁵⁷ Iskander, 86.

²⁵⁸ ZAB, 29.

currently engaged in the service (33,000) - a critical feature of an economy suffering from high rates of unemployment, searching for poverty reduction strategies and employment generation schemes.”²⁵⁹

Third is the promise of upward social mobility. If they guaranteed equality, there would be no room for competition or development. As is the example I mentioned before with the lady who was lucky, and she and her husband managed to achieve upward social mobility. All the poorer women in the settlement were looking up to her, hoping that one day they could achieve higher status as her.²⁶⁰ Therefore, human progress enforces inequality, but this is the positive part of inequality. Inequality in this sense provides incentive for the poor to increase productivity and innovation to achieve upward social mobility since entrepreneurs require rewards.

²⁵⁹ Laila Iskandar, Berti Shaker, and Rami El-Sherbiny, 2010. *Economic Aspects of Informal Sector Activities in Solid Waste Management* (Cairo: CID Consulting, 2010), 77.

²⁶⁰ Motaal, 99.

Chapter 7

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion to my thesis, the community of *Zabbaleen* face exclusion and marginalization in different forms, and their perception of reality is shaped accordingly. They perceive themselves as marginalized subjects who are subject to unjustified abusive actions. One interviewee narrates, “in many houses and enterprises, there are no electricity meters, yet we receive electricity pills. And for others, they receive electricity bills for more than their consumption. Once a microenterprise received a pill for EGP 14,000 and another time for EGP 8,000, and when we complained they told us that this is an estimate for your consumption. And to convince them otherwise, it is a very long complicated process.” He continues, “we ourselves the garbage collectors have to pay the garbage collection fees with electricity bills. And when we complained they told us consider these fees as taxes or royalties. Because we are a Christian community, there is some oppression.” The interviewee was also upset because he says “they change ministers continuously. We do not understand what they want. Someone like Dr. Laila Iskandar, she was well-informed about the environment and informal settlements, but she was in office only for a very limited time. Sometimes they appoint officials whose knowledge are very limited in their profiles”.

Unfortunately, the community shares a negation perception of the government while other perceive it as nonexistent. An excluded microenterprise owner expressed his view in another study saying that “the state in general as a ‘failing entity’, whose policies are against the poor and young graduates like himself, thus, he feels marginalized.”²⁶¹ And because of their informality, they have to pay bribes all the time to overcome the official challenges. For them, they think that they do not

²⁶¹ Gelil, 27.

save the taxes because they have to pay them as bribes unjustified bills with the negative externality of misconduct.²⁶² One interviewee told me that “on the launch of government recycling kiosks, people and governments are envying us for the garbage that we collect, considering us collecting gold.” But on the good side, it created awareness among people. I started to witness children in the streets collecting cans in kilos to sell them. But on the other hand, it takes from our share in garbage.”

Many *Zabbaleen* expressed their anger that many generals and high ranks in the public sector are now entering the recycling business. They already have their institutions, so they just take the excreted garbage and recycle. They are stressed because these high profiles can make garbage companies and issue the needed document and licenses easily. For them the *Zabbaleen*, the situation became more complicated because they are afraid from competition or monopolies one day. However, *Zabbaleen* still believe in their coping strategies, and their main concern now is to re-assume their garbage share that was negatively affected after the multi-nationals.

Limitations

The first limitation for my research was the connections and the feasibility of conducting ethnographic fieldwork in the garbage village, and whether it would be oral interviews, oral history interviews, or a complete ethnographic fieldwork. So, would my position as an outsider to the neighborhood limit my access to knowledge and data? Therefore, this might have limited my access to the primary data sources to the neighborhood and the feasibility of finding participants. Second, big part of my research is concerned with inequalities within the community, so I want to explore this with my interlocuters without disturbing or threatening the cohesion of the

²⁶² Gelil, 27.

community. Third, one limitation of conducting a case study research with my chosen data collection methods is that the results and the analysis tends to be interpretive and subject to researchers. Furthermore, there is a big challenge with the selective memory, therefore, I tried to document and record all my data. Fourth, many of the neighborhood residents also work in A.P.E or other organizations, so they hold dual identities with positionalities. Fifth, my research design tackles neoliberalism primarily as policy, which misses neoliberalism as governmentality. This could be a limitation to understanding neoliberalism as a bigger more complicated phenomenon, hindering some relations' analysis. Sixth, I faced some challenges in translating the interviews because the interviewees used many Arabic words that do not have parallels in English, so I have done my best to check the accuracy of the translations and use the same words meaning.

Recommendations

According to the policy modelling study,²⁶³ more integration of the garbage informal sector into the formal sector has a huge potential “not only to increase the informal sector revenues, but also to reduce the formal sector costs and the total solid waste system costs in a city”...leading to “net benefit rise significantly.”²⁶⁴ Therefore, regularizing the informal sector and integration will end up with higher rate of materials recovery and high benefits not only for the sustainability of the community, but also for the country.

El Zabbaleen and the informal recycling microenterprises represent excellent business partners to the authorities and formal sector because of many reasons. First, they have a quick response to market's supply and demand, which make them important supplies of materials and recyclables,

²⁶³ Gunsilius, 26.

²⁶⁴ Gunsilius, 26.

vitalize recycling and garbage business, and increase investments. They have all the assets needed and have positive impact on economic growth and environment. Third, they have trading network all over Egypt and a large network of customers who depend on their regular deliveries. Fourth, they offer employment opportunities for the unemployed unskilled and semi-skilled labor. Fifth, their wages are higher than the national average wage of workers. Sixth, they have positive effect on investment and capital accumulation for the local and export economy. Seventh, they have better experience in sorting/product differentiation and recycling the technologically advanced products.²⁶⁵

Furthermore, the increased price of virgin plastics and the increased demand for recycled plastics make the small recycling enterprises very attractive as suppliers to the large industries. This could lead to multiple benefits to the *Zabbaleen*. Large industries that are already well-organized and have good representation in business associations could help *Zabbaleen* settlements to formalize and upgrade. They (recyclers) would engage more in the industrial national business rather than mere waste collection, adding more value to their products. This would help them in reaching out to a larger network of consumers and markets.²⁶⁶ Large industries and the authorities might find more incentive to help them in all of these points or might repeat yesterday's mistakes by replicating the privatization programmes.

The higher they contribute to the value chain, the better performance they achieve. According to a study concerned with the value chain in the garbage informal sector. It divides the labor into upstream labor who do the primary and secondary sorting of materials before selling them and

²⁶⁵ CID, 22-23.

²⁶⁶ CID, 52.

downstream labor who work in the next steps in the value chain, such as shredding and washing of plastics.²⁶⁷ The study states that downstream generate more revenue and are less vulnerable to shocks. “For example, the selling price obtained by the upstream collectors/primary sorters for PET bottles did not change from 2010 to 2015, while the market price obtained by the downstream recyclers increased by 20%. Similarly, when market prices crashed following the oil price collapse in late 2014, it was the upstream actors, who lack storage space and had to sell even when prices were at their lowest, who were hit hardest.”²⁶⁸

One attempt by the Plastic Technology Center and the Ministry of Industry was to integrate the small recyclers as business incubators and self-financing cost-recovery center to develop the plastic industry. This national strategy was aiming to harmonize the plastic industry sector, attract more FDI in the plastic industry sector, and achieve social and development goals.²⁶⁹ This strategy would open the door for many residents to reach different ministries and organizations that could have been largely hard for them to reach.

Also, there is an important need for awareness campaigns for Cairenes. They need to be educated of how to properly dispose the garbage. They need to get rid of the negative stigma associated with garbage and *Zabbaleen*. One interviewee told me “during the awareness campaigns of garbage

²⁶⁷ Remi Jaligot, David Wilson, Christopher Cheesemana, Berti Shaker, and Joachim Stretz, "Applying value chain analysis to informal sector recycling: A case study of the Zabaleen," *Resources, Conservation and Recycling* 114 (2016): 82.

²⁶⁸ Jaligot, et al., 89.

²⁶⁹ CID, 52- 53.

separation from the sources that started in 1993 up to 2000s, I was one of the people who went on awareness campaigns to educate people and give them appropriate baskets. However, they were usually resentful and aggressive. they had this negative attitude of do u want me to work as *Zabbal*?! So, the campaign failed.” Therefore, Cairenes need to understand the multi-dimensional services that the *Zabbaleen* are providing to one of the most polluted cities in the world.

The informal sector represents a healthy dynamic, providing jobs for urban worker and adapting to the general patterns of economic growth and negative shocks. The informal sector enjoys very high adaptability, and is highly competitive with subsidized large industries; as a result, they provide essential goods and services that not only citizens depend on, but also technologies and big international businesses depend on. Their entrepreneurial potential can drastically increase if they overcame their growth obstacles

The government can easily abolish documents obstacles and barriers of registration if formalized they can contribute the national economic growth. By formalization, *Zabbaleen* would have legal title to the land and assets to use as collaterals and guarantees that they can use in transactions. They would be able to issue invoices and receipts to avoid exploitation. It is a win-win situation in a successful system,²⁷⁰ in which *Zabbaleen* have real assets rather than dead assets to increase their productivity and integrate with the government services and private businesses. They would have better access to technical support and credit to adopt appropriate technologies that would prevent them the persistent health hazards while they remain in their neighborhoods to practice their trade but upgrade the settlement and infrastructure. It is a good opportunity for the authority to save many costs, especially with the existence grassroot development and community

²⁷⁰ ZAB.

organizations in the settlement. *Zabbaleen* are not invited to address any of their relevant issues, but they would love to be on day and to be mobilized by a common vision and a better future. It is not a radical change moment; it is rather a dynamic step by step process.

As gradual steps of this process, On the 4th of July, 2018, the council of ministers agreed to separate the electricity fees from the garbage collection fees, and the fees would be calculated for every neighborhood. They also stated that who refuses to pay the garbage collection fees will be legally punished. As a result, Shehata elmeades, the captain of scavengers, declared that the *Zabbaleen* are enthusiastic for this decision, and that they were the first to propose it. He also stated that there is a proposed plan to the government to make a company, in which the government has 51% of the profit and the rest is for *Zabbaleen*. He said that the multinationals contracts will end on 31st of December, 2018. This plan will be enforced in 2019, according to his interview with *el Dostour* newspaper.²⁷¹

Moreover, a new positive step took place in November 2018 after the Spanish multinational contract in Nasr city had ended with the government. A new one-year contract (open to renewal) has been signed with *el-Zabbaleen*, in which twenty *Zabbaleen* would be assigned for every square in an area of forty-seven squares, and the government has to pay EGP 4 per housing building for

²⁷¹ Hagar Reda, *Captain of Scavenger on the System of waste Management: This is our plan from the beginning and we are welcoming it*, July 4, 2018, accessed July 24, 2018.

<https://www.dostor.org/2236585>.

every *Zabbal*.²⁷² If such decision would be generalized for all the neighborhoods in Greater Cairo, this would offer very positive opportunities and include 7250 enterprises that belong to *Zabbaleen*.²⁷³ These steps could be a good start for the new vision to have a clean Cairo and sustainable entrepreneurial community rather than dirty Cairo and excluded marginalized community.

²⁷² Aya Deabes, "نقيب الزبالين يعلن بدء توليهم نظافة مدينة نصر مقابل 4 جنيهات شهريا للوحدة", *youth7*, November 8, 2018, accessed November 11, 2018.

²⁷³ Deabes.

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