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The case of Cairo, Egypt

Elwageeh , Aya

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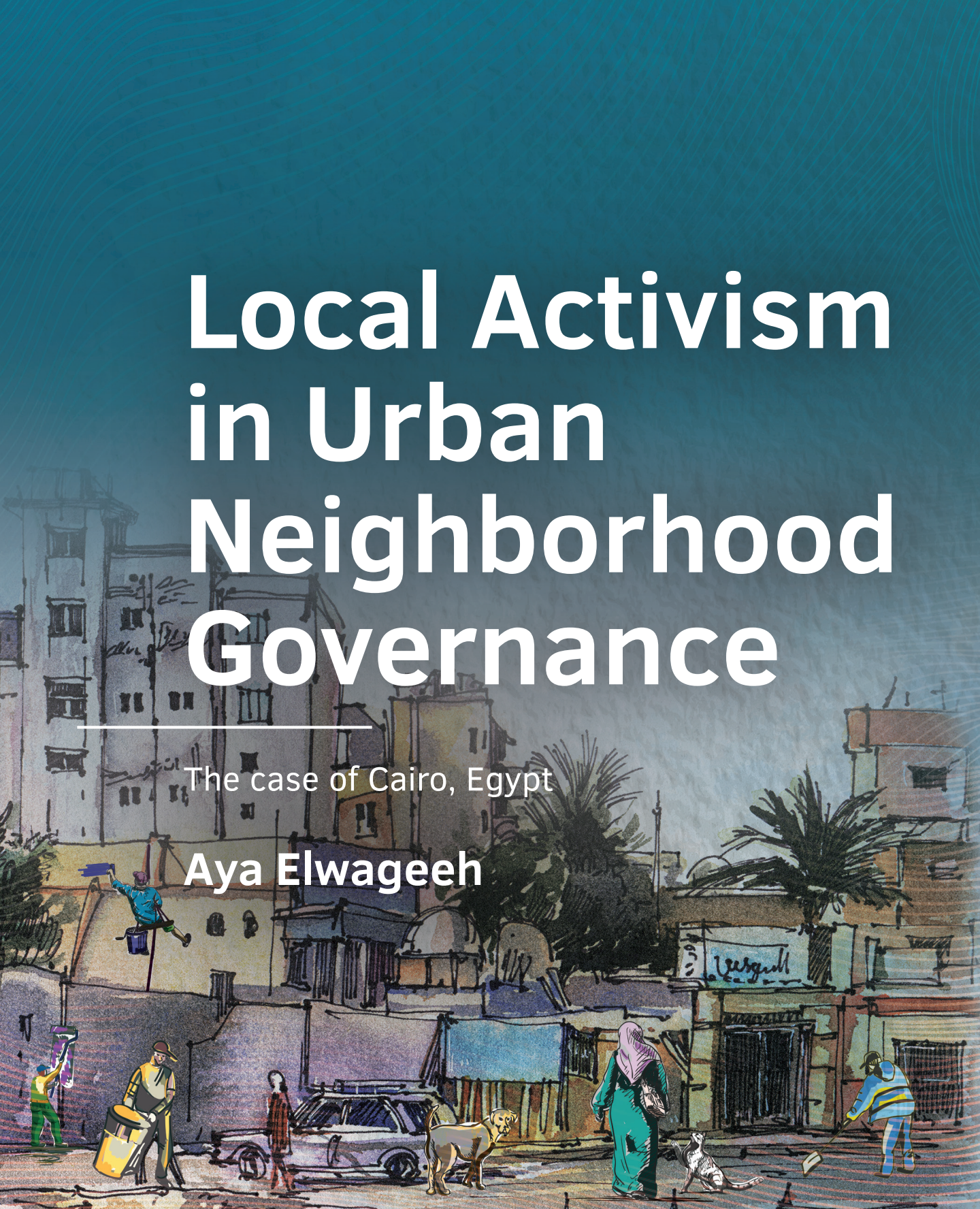

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Local Activism in Urban Neighborhood Governance

The case of Cairo, Egypt

Dissertation

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chair of the Board for Doctorates
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by

Aya Mossad Ali Elwageeh
Master of Science in Integrated Urbanism and Sustainable Design,
University of Stuttgart, Germany and Ain Shams University, Egypt
born in Gharbeya, Egypt

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This dissertation has been approved by the promotors.

Composition of the doctoral committee:

Rector Magnificus	chairperson
Prof. dr. M. van Ham	Delft University of Technology, promotor
Dr. R.J. Kleinhans	Delft University of Technology, promotor

Independent members:

Prof. dr. E. Lust	University of Gothenburg
Prof. dr. A.R. Pereira Roders	Delft University of Technology
Prof. dr. T. de Moor	Erasmus University Rotterdam
Prof. dr. J. Edelenbos	Erasmus University Rotterdam
Prof. dr. W.A.M. Zonneveld	Delft University of Technology

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List of Abbreviations

ARLEM	Assemblée Régionale et Locale Euro-Méditerranéenne [Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly]
CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics
CBD	Central Business District
EDG	Environment Development Group
EEAA	Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency
EGP	Egyptian Pound
ENC	East Nasr City district
GCR	Greater Cairo Region
GCUDS	Greater Cairo Urban Development Strategy
GOPP	General Organization for Physical Planning
IPS	Inspections & Public Service
LPC	Local Popular Council
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MHUUD	Ministry of Housing, Utilities & Urban Communities
NAC	New Administrative Capital
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NUC	New Urban Community
NUCA	New Urban Communities Authority
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAA	Policy Arrangement Approach
PDP Egypt	Participatory Development Programme in Egypt
TIMEP	Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy
UDC	Urban Development Consortium

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Summary

As the capital of Egypt, Cairo has a main agglomeration and three new urban communities. The main agglomeration has most of the population residing in Cairo, straining the city's resources and infrastructure. The authorities address this challenge in a centralized manner that suffers from insufficient funding allocation and ineffective prioritization of urban development. Additionally, bureaucracy and limited power and resources hinder the district's local government system, resulting in urban deterioration throughout different socio-economic neighborhoods. Numerous resident groups in Cairo are working to maintain and beautify their neighborhoods in response to urban deterioration. Many of these groups emerged following the 2011 revolution and have organized cleanup campaigns, neighborhood security gates, and maintained local gardens. Despite the disappearance of many groups due to repression after political turbulence in 2013, more groups have formed to address ongoing urban deterioration. However, there is limited research on these active groups; thus, little is known regarding their characteristics, roles, and relationships with local governance arrangements. This thesis aims to better understand local activism in the politically challenging context of Cairo. The research has four objectives to address this aim. They are:

1 to identify the variations between the existing literature on active citizens in neighborhood governance and the observed local activism in politically challenging contexts, including Cairo;
2 to explore *what* aims, strategies, and state–citizen interactions local activism in Cairo reveals;
3 to unravel *how*, exactly, local activism features in Cairo's local governance process; and
4 to understand *why* local activism in Cairo exists in a particular manner and features in specific roles in local governance processes.

Conceptually, this thesis investigates the concepts of "active citizenship" in the context of "neighborhood governance" that we refer to as local activism. Local activism involves any activities initiated by resident groups to improve their neighborhoods' urban conditions. This research focuses on local activism in politically challenging contexts where authoritarian regimes are hostile to activism and lack basic civil rights protections, freedom of speech, and independent institutions. The study addresses the issue of a lack of research on local activism

in politically challenging contexts, compared to contexts that enable local activism or allow citizens to demand their right to the city. It also highlights the significance of context in shaping the role of active residents in their neighborhoods and thus focuses on Cairo city as an example of a politically challenging context.

Methodologically, this thesis utilizes a qualitative research methodology using observations and semi-structured interviews. For the observations, Facebook was the main platform used for collecting data and connecting with active resident groups in Cairo. The study selected 18 active resident groups in formal areas that aim to improve the urban conditions of their neighborhoods. The online activities of these groups were analyzed through photos, screenshots, and videos found on their Facebook groups and pages. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with both local officials and members of the resident groups. Between 2019 and 2020, we interviewed 19 active members from 15 active resident groups in nine districts. Additionally, nine heads of district offices or their delegates in these nine districts were also interviewed. For the analysis, each objective had its own framework that was applied to the data collected from the observations and interviews.

For the first objective, we reviewed the literature to better understand the applicability of the dominant Global North perspectives and experiences to local activism in Global South realities. Our literature reviews concluded that the Northwestern literature is invaluable in guiding and improving local activism in contexts where the centrality of right-based and state–citizen collaboration considerations are recognized. However, in parts of the Global South where local activism is central to need-based considerations and state–citizen collaboration is selective, the main North-Western literature can be very limited in understanding local activism. We also noticed differences between the characteristics of active resident groups from cities such as Cairo and Johannesburg and the “quiet encroachment” and “insurgent citizenship” concepts dominating Global South literature on activism.

For the second objective, we explored what aims, strategies, and state–citizen interactions local activism in Cairo has by identifying active resident groups from Facebook and observing their main activities and aims. We found that many active groups practice local activism as a right to a certain urban quality within the neighborhoods. It is a right that rarely extends to the residents’ right to decide on neighborhood urban improvement and policies. The active groups were either self-provisioning groups that confront and ultimately cooperate with local officials, advocacy groups that demand accountability and action from local officials less confrontationally, or user groups that settle for online criticism.

As for the third objective, we explored the various roles of active residents from multiple districts with different organizational types and identified the commonalities among them in relation to the neighborhood governance process. By doing this, we unravel how local activism features in Cairo's local governance process. We found that the space for active residents to influence neighborhood governance is mainly limited to implementation and management. In this limited space, active residents' role is confined to either the "fixer," which restores existing services, or that of a struggling and intermittent "self-provider." Furthermore, we found that they have no influential role in policy formulation.

For the fourth objective, we explained why the uncovered characteristics and limited roles of local activism in Cairo exist. We found that Cairo's local governance practice consists of:

1. poor and unevenly distributed *resources*,
2. exclusionary activities from the government *actors*,
3. *rules* that repress residents' engagement and limit district offices to an administrative role, and
4. a *discourse* loaded with mistrust and responsibilities disclaim.

We learned about a link between the rules, resources, and government actors shaping the highly dependent local activism. Additionally, the analysis showed two links between rules, resources, and discourse. One that discourages activism protesting government and encourages apolitical one instead. The other link encourages activism focused on fixing minor neighborhood repairs. Finally, we have learned about a link between resources and discourse that discourages sustained self-provision activism.

Theoretically and conceptually, this study contributes to our general knowledge about local activism in politically challenging contexts and Cairo specifically. On the scale of local activism in politically challenging contexts, this study concludes that local activism in Cairo differs from the concepts and context assumptions dominating the leading North-Western literature and the limited Global South one on residents' activism in neighborhood governance. Its state–citizen interactions differ from the prevalent belief in the centrality of connected, coordinated, and responsive state–citizen interactions for practicing effective local activism in the Northwestern literature. Also, the non-centrality of rights-based motivations in Cairo's local activism contradicts the belief that residents count on activism as a basic right to articulate their aims and choose their means and activities. Additionally, this study broadens the scope of our knowledge on local activism besides and beyond the "insurgent" and "quiet encroachment" forms of activism dominantly discussed in the Global South. After studying local activism in Cairo, we argue that even the few

features partially in line with insurgent citizenship or quiet encroachment exist for different reasons and are achieved by very different strategies and tactics. As such, this study broadens the scope of our knowledge on local activism besides and beyond insurgent citizenship and quiet encroachment and enriches our understanding of the wide range of residents' activism in urban planning and governance.

On the scale of local activism in Cairo, the existing knowledge is neither updated nor covers strategies and activities of various resident groups nor includes multiple local actors' perspectives. This study has extended the limited current research on local activism in six ways. First, this study is one of the few studies, if not the only to identify the different types of resident groups currently active in Cairo. Identifying many unorganized groups in this study aligns with the argument that civil society in many parts of the world is far from structured or homogeneous and thus not easily detectable or definable.

Second, interviewing members from 15 active resident groups from nine districts varying in population, density, and urban characteristics has helped assess to what extent active groups in Cairo play different roles and features in the different dimensions of local governance. Our results showed that Cairo's challenging context limits specific roles and leads to commonalities in the existing roles. The significant presence of self-provider roles in implementing and managing urban improvements in Cairo aligns with the wide presence of collective self-help activities in economically struggling contexts in the literature. Additionally, our findings reveal that Cairo's challenging context motivates active residents to develop tactics that shape a new collective role (i.e., the fixer role) that we did not find in the literature on collective actions by residents.

Third, this study revealed that local officials' interaction with active residents depends on the individual characteristics of the officials in the district offices rather than district offices as local governmental entities with defined rules and transparent systems. This personal power did not result in variation in the perspectives of local officials on the active groups and their activities. On the contrary, our study revealed that the nine officials from nine different districts majorly share the same perspective on residents' activism in Cairo.

Fourth, the results have shown that the "rules" element in Cairo's local governance practices is the starting point to which the respondents kept referring when talking about the influence of the local governance arrangements on producing limited apolitical and highly dependent activism. The significant influence of the rules is not exclusive to Cairo or politically challenging contexts. However, we argue that if rules generally determine the barriers and opportunities for active residents and officials

to act, the rules in Cairo's context mainly act as barriers with minimal opportunities for activism. Thus, the influence of the rules becomes even more crucial in Cairo's politically challenging context.

Fifth and related, our findings show that Cairo's politically challenging context tolerates apolitical activism that barely fixes urban deterioration without addressing the underlying governance arrangements causing it. In Cairo, being apolitical is not only about stripping the declared goals of the active groups from any intentions toward changing the governance arrangements but also about what strategies and tactics the active group choose. Submitting a request for the resignation of a specific local official on the most local level of governance is more tolerable than a protest regarding a local and materialistic interest. Sixth and finally, our findings show that apolitical activism and the exclusionary government performance have extended to all of Cairo's districts as opposed to previous studies and perceptions that these dynamics exist in poor neighborhoods.

This study has societal contributions as it provides scholars, decision-makers, and local actors interested in local activism in Cairo with in-depth knowledge from officials' and citizens' perspectives in relation to the political environment and the resultant local governance practice. For instance, by knowing the absent roles, the ones that had a chance, and the (un)attainable governance dimensions by active residents, local actors can make informed decisions regarding reinforcing the existing roles, enabling absent ones, or possibly creating new ones. Furthermore, researchers and local actors can use the traced sources of the limited local activism in Cairo's local governance arrangements to identify and prioritize the needed interventions to improve local activism. Finally, the research informs about the importance and significant difficulty of shifting the political will in a challenging context such as Egypt. With such knowledge, interested actors should be aware of how important it is to co-investigate with residents, local officials, and central government officials what gradual change in local governance the political system of Egypt may allow, and the local actors may accept to initiate.

Methodologically, the research did not only attempt to use well-known theoretical frameworks and approaches as is but also to contribute to these frameworks through adaptations and modification. The modifications that occurred during the frameworks' development and after applying them add to the arsenal of theoretical frameworks researchers can use to map and analyze local activism in complex settings and contexts.

Samenvatting

Caïro, de hoofdstad van Egypte, heeft een centrale agglomeratie met daarbij drie nieuwe voorsteden. De centrale agglomeratie telt het merendeel van de inwoners, waardoor de stedelijke voorzieningen en infrastructuur hier onder grote druk staan. De autoriteiten gaan deze uitdaging op gecentraliseerde wijze aan, met een aanpak die lijdt onder een gebrek aan middelen en een inefficiënte nadruk op nieuwe projectontwikkelingen. Daarnaast wordt het districtsbestuur gehinderd door een gebrek aan bevoegdheden en geld, wat leidt tot een gestaag verval in wijken met uiteenlopende sociaaleconomische samenstelling. Caïro kent talloze bewonersgroeperingen die dit verval trachten tegen te gaan door de stad te onderhouden en te verbeteren. Veel van deze groeperingen zijn kort na de revolutie van 2011 ontstaan en hebben schoonmaakcampagnes georganiseerd, veiligheidspoorten in wijken geïnstalleerd en stadstuinen aangelegd. Ondanks de verdwijning van veel van deze groeperingen, als gevolg van de repressie na de politieke onlusten van 2013, zijn er nieuwe groeperingen ontstaan die proberen het aanhoudende stedelijke verval tegen te gaan. Naar deze actieve groeperingen is nog maar weinig wetenschappelijk onderzoek gedaan, waardoor er ook weinig bekend is over hun aard, rol en relatie tot het plaatselijk bestuur. Deze scriptie heeft tot doel meer inzicht te krijgen in het lokaal activisme binnen de uitdagende politieke context van Caïro. Vanuit dat doel richt dit onderzoek zich op vier vraagstellingen:

1 het identificeren van de verschillen in de bestaande literatuur over actieve bewoners in wijkbesturen en het waargenomen lokaal activisme in politiek uitdagende contexten zoals die van Caïro;
2 het onderzoek doen naar *welke* doelstellingen, strategieën en interacties tussen overheid en burger het lokale activisme berust;
3 het nauwgezet identificeren *hoe* lokaal activisme een rol speelt in lokale bestuursprocessen in Caïro; en
4 het verkrijgen van inzicht in de vraag *waarom* het lokaal activisme in Caïro zijn specifieke vorm heeft, en bepaalde rollen in lokale bestuursprocessen speelt.

In conceptuele zin wordt in deze scriptie onderzoek gedaan naar de noties van ‘actief burgerschap’ en ‘buurtbestuur’, die we omschrijven als lokaal activisme. Lokaal activisme behelst activiteiten die door bewonersgroepen op touw zijn gezet om de stedelijke omstandigheden van hun eigen buurt te verbeteren. Dit onderzoek richt zich op lokaal activisme binnen een context waarin autoritaire regimes vijandig tegenover

vormen van politiek activisme staan en waarin fundamentele mensenrechten, de vrijheid van meningsuiting en onafhankelijke instituties ontbreken. Het onderzoek gaat in op het gebrek aan kennis van lokaal activisme in politiek uitdagende contexten, ten opzichte van contexten waarin zulk activisme mogelijk wordt gemaakt en burgers inspraak hebben in het bestuur van hun stad. Er wordt stilgestaan bij het belang van context bij het vormgeven van de rol die actieve bewoners in hun eigen buurt spelen, waarbij de stad Caïro als voorbeeld dient van een politiek uitdagende context.

Qua methode, is in deze scriptie gebruik gemaakt van kwalitatief onderzoek aan de hand van observaties en semigestructureerde interviews. Voor de observaties werd Facebook gebruikt als voornaamste platform voor het vergaren van gegevens en het contact leggen met actieve bewonersgroepen in Caïro. Voor het onderzoek werden achttien bewonersgroepen geselecteerd die zich bezighouden met het verbeteren van de stedelijke omgeving. De online-activiteiten van deze groepen werden geanalyseerd aan de hand van de foto's, screenshots en video's die op hun Facebook-groepen en -pagina's werden aangetroffen. Semigestructureerde interviews werden afgenomen aan zowel lokale functionarissen als aan leden van bewonersgroepen. In 2019 en 2020 werden negentien actieve leden van vijftien actieve bewonersgroepen in negen stadswijken geïnterviewd. Daarnaast werden in deze negen wijken ook de negen districtshoofden of hun plaatsvervangers geïnterviewd. De gegevens die uit de waarnemingen en interviews werden vergaard, zijn in een eigen kader voor elk van de vier doelstellingen apart geanalyseerd.

Met betrekking tot de eerste vraagstelling onderzochten we de literatuur om meer inzicht te krijgen in de toepasbaarheid van de heersende Global North-perspectieven en ervaringen op lokaal activisme in de werkelijkheid van de Global South. Uit dat literatuuronderzoek kwam naar voren dat de noord-westerse literatuur onmisbaar is bij het leiden en verbeteren van lokaal activisme in contexten waarin de rol van de samenwerking tussen burger en overheid centraal staat en burgerrechtelijk wordt erkend. Maar in regio's op het zuidelijk halfrond waar lokaal activisme berust op bittere noodzaak en waar de samenwerking tussen burger en overheid selectief is, biedt de toonaangevende westerse benadering maar een beperkt inzicht in lokaal activisme. We vonden ook verschillen in de karakteristieken van actieve bewonersgroeperingen in steden als Caïro en Johannesburg en concepten als *quiet encroachment* (gestaag woekeren) en *insurgent citizenship* (opstandig burgerschap) die op het zuidelijk halfrond een belangrijke rol in de Global South-literatuur over activisme spelen.

Wat betreft de tweede vraagstelling onderzochten we met welke doelen, strategieën en interacties tussen burger en overheid lokaal activisme in Caïro werkt, door aan de hand van Facebook actieve bewonersgroeperingen te identificeren en hun voornaamste activiteiten en doelstellingen te onderzoeken. We ontdekten dat veel

actieve groeperingen in hun lokaal activisme het recht opeisten om de stedelijke kwaliteit van leven in hun wijk te verbeteren; een recht dat zelden samenvalt met het recht van bewoners om mee te beslissen over stadsverbetering en stedelijk beleid. Actieve groeperingen waren óf zelfvoorzienende organisaties die de confrontatie met plaatselijke functionarissen aangingen en uiteindelijk ook met hen gingen samenwerken, óf mensenrechtengroeperingen die op minder confronterende wijze transparantie en maatregelen van plaatselijke functionarissen eisten, óf gebruikersgroepen die zaken op het internet aan de kaak stelden.

Met betrekking tot de derde vraagstelling onderzochten we de uiteenlopende rollen van actieve bewoners in meerdere wijken met verschillende organisatietypen, en identificeerden we de overeenkomsten tussen deze groeperingen wat betreft hun relaties tot lokale bestuursprocessen. Daardoor konden we analyseren welke rol lokaal activisme in het lokale bestuur van Caïro speelt. We ontdekten dat de ruimte die actieve bewoners hebben om het lokale bestuur te beïnvloeden vooral wordt beperkt tot de uitvoering en het beheer van projecten. In deze begrensde ruimte wordt de rol van actieve bewoners beperkt tot die van 'oplossers' die bestaande stedelijke diensten herstellen of tot die van ploeterende en probleemoplossende 'zelfvoorzieners'. Daarnaast ontdekten we dat zij geen grote invloed hebben op de formulering van stedelijk beleid.

Wat betreft de vierde vraagstelling lichten we de oorzaken van de waargenomen kenmerken en de beperkte rol van het lokaal activisme in Caïro nader toe. We constateren dat de bestuurspraktijk in Caïro wordt gekenmerkt door:

1. gebrekkige en ongelijk verdeelde middelen;
2. uitsluitende activiteiten van de overheid;
3. regelgeving die de betrokkenheid van bewoners tegenwerkt en die wijkbesturen beperkt tot een louter administratieve rol; en
4. een discours dat is geladen met wantrouwen en het bagatelliseren van verantwoordelijkheden.

We kregen meer inzicht in de relaties tussen enerzijds de regels, middelen en bestuurders en anderzijds het uiterst afhankelijke lokaal activisme. Uit onze analyse blijkt dat er twee type verbanden bestaan: één waarin activistische protesten tegen de overheid worden ontmoedigd en een apolitieke benadering wordt bevorderd, en één waarin activisme wordt beperkt tot het oplossen of repareren van kleinere buurtproblemen. Ten slotte staan we stil bij het verband tussen middelen en discours waarin aanhoudend zelfvoorzienend activisme wordt ontmoedigd.

In theoretische en conceptuele zin draagt dit onderzoek bij aan algemene inzichten in lokaal activisme in politiek uitdagende contexten, in het bijzonder in Caïro. De studie komt tot de conclusie dat het lokaal activisme in Caïro niet aansluit op de concepten en veronderstellingen met betrekking tot contexten die in de westerse literatuur overheersen, noch op de beperkte Global South–literatuur over bewonersactivisme met betrekking tot het bestuur van hun wijk. De interacties tussen burger en overheid in Caïro onderscheiden zich van het heersende geloof in de westerse literatuur waarin het belang van goed verbonden, gecoördineerde en responsieve interacties tussen burgers en overheid centraal staat. Ook druist het geringe belang van burgerrechtelijke motivaties in het lokale activisme in Caïro in tegen het idee dat inwoners lokaal activisme beschouwen als een burgerrecht waarmee ze hun doelstellingen kunnen formuleren en hun middelen en activiteiten kunnen kiezen. Daarnaast breidt de studie de reikwijdte van onze inzichten in lokaal activisme uit tot voorbij de 'quiet encroachment'- en 'insurgent citizenship'-benaderingen die de discussies in de Global South overheersen. Na bestudering van het lokaal activisme in Caïro stellen we dat zelfs de weinige kenmerken die wél aansluiten op 'quiet encroachment'- en 'insurgent citizenship'-benaderingen, een andere oorzaak hebben en ook via zeer verschillende strategieën en tactieken worden bereikt. Als zodanig breidt deze studie onze kennis over lokaal activisme uit tot voorbij deze benaderingen en verrijkt ze onze inzichten in het brede scala van activisme van bewonersgroepen met betrekking tot stedelijke planning en stadsbestuur.

Op het niveau van lokaal activisme in Caïro is de bestaande kennis niet geactualiseerd en gaat niet in op de strategieën en activiteiten van uiteenlopende bewonersgroepen en op de perspectieven van meerdere lokale actoren. Deze studie gaat op zes wijzen verder dan het beperkte onderzoek naar lokaal activisme. Ten eerste is het een van de weinige studies, zo niet het enige onderzoek, waarin de verschillende soorten bewonersgroepen die momenteel in Caïro actief zijn, worden geïdentificeerd. De identificatie van de vele ongeorganiseerde groeperingen in deze studie sluit aan op de opvatting dat de burgersamenleving op veel plekken in de wereld verre van gestructureerd of homogeen is, en daardoor slecht identificeerbaar en definieerbaar maakt.

Ten tweede hebben de interviews met leden van vijftien actieve bewoners-groeperingen uit wijken met verschillende bevolkingssamenstellingen, bevolkingsdichtheden en stedelijke kenmerken bijgedragen aan het beantwoorden van de vraag welke rollen activistische groeperingen in de verschillende dimensies van het lokale bestuur van Caïro spelen en welke kenmerken ze daarbij aan de dag leggen. Uit de resultaten blijkt dat de uitdagende context van Caïro specifieke rollen beperkt maar ook tot overeenkomsten in bestaande rollen leidt. Het aanzienlijke aandeel van zelfvoorzienende rollen bij de implementatie en het beheer van stadsverbeteringen in Caïro sluit aan op de brede aanwezigheid van collectieve

zelfhulpactiviteiten in economisch noodlijdende contexten die in de literatuur worden behandeld. Daarnaast blijkt uit onze bevindingen dat de uitdagende context van Caïro actieve bewoners aanspoort tot het ontwikkelen van tactieken waarmee een nieuwe collectieve rol (die van de 'oplosser') wordt gecreëerd; een rol die we niet terugvinden in de literatuur over collectief bewonersactivisme.

Ten derde blijkt uit de studie dat de interactie van plaatselijke functionarissen met actieve bewoners veeleer afhangt van de individuele eigenschappen van de betreffende functionaris dan van wijkorganen in hun rol als plaatselijke overheidsinstanties met welomschreven en transparante regels. Deze persoonlijke macht leidde onder plaatselijke functionarissen niet tot variaties in hun perspectief met betrekking tot actieve groeperingen en hun activiteiten. Integendeel, uit onze studie blijkt dat de negen beambten uit de negen verschillende stadswijken grotendeels hetzelfde perspectief op het activisme onder de inwoners van Caïro delen.

Ten vierde blijkt uit de resultaten dat de geïnterviewden met betrekking tot de invloed van het plaatselijk beleid op het ontstaan van apolitiek en hoogst afhankelijk activisme telkens verwijzen naar regelgeving in de bestuurspraktijk van Caïro. De aanzienlijke invloed van deze regelgeving geldt weliswaar niet uitsluitend voor Caïro of voor politiek uitdagende contexten. Wij stellen echter dat de regels in het algemeen de obstakels en mogelijkheden voor het handelen van actieve bewoners en functionarissen bepalen, en dat zij in de context van Caïro vooral als obstakels fungeren die een minimum aan activisme toelaten. De invloed van de regelgeving is in de politiek uitdagende context van Caïro dus nóg bepalender.

Daarmee in verband staat onze vijfde conclusie, namelijk dat de politiek uitdagende context van Caïro een apolitiek activisme toelaat dat amper kan ingrijpen in het proces van stedelijk verval en niet ingaat op de onderliggende bestuurspraktijk die dat verval veroorzaakt. In Caïro gaat het er bij apolitieke activiteiten niet alleen om de verklaarde doelstellingen van actieve groeperingen te ontdoen van elke intentie tot verandering in de politieke realiteit, maar ook om de strategieën en tactieken die de actieve groeperingen kiezen. Op het meest lokale bestuursniveau is het indienen van een verzoek tot het aftreden van een bepaalde stadsfunctionaris méér aanvaardbaar dan protesten tegen lokale en materiële belangen.

Ten zesde blijkt uit onze bevindingen dat apolitiek activisme en de uitsluitende rol van de overheid hebben postgevat in alle stadswijken van Caïro. Dit in tegenstelling tot wat in eerdere studies en opvattingen is verwoord, namelijk dat deze dynamiek alleen voor armere wijken zou gelden.

Deze studie beoogt ook een bijdrage te leveren aan het sociale debat, aangezien ze wetenschappers, besluitvormers en lokale actoren die zich interesseren voor het lokaal activisme in Caïro de gelegenheid biedt zich vertrouwd te maken met diepgaande kennis over het perspectief van zowel functionarissen als burgers met betrekking tot het politieke klimaat en de daaruit voortvloeiende lokale bestuurspraktijk. Door bijvoorbeeld te weten welke rollen afwezig zijn, welke rollen kans hebben gehad zich te ontplooien en wat de al dan niet haalbare bestuursdoelen van actieve bewoners zijn, kunnen lokale actoren goedgeïnformeerde besluiten nemen met betrekking tot het versterken van bestaande rollen, het bevorderen van afwezige rollen of het ontwikkelen van nieuwe rollen. Bovendien kunnen onderzoekers en lokale actoren de achterhaalde bronnen voor het beperkte lokale activisme binnen de bestuurspraktijk van Caïro aanwenden om maatregelen te identificeren en te actualiseren die nodig zijn voor het verbeteren van het lokaal activisme. Ten slotte biedt deze studie inzicht in het belang van en de aanzienlijke obstakels voor veranderingen in de politieke wil in de politiek-uitdagende context van Egypte. Met deze kennis kunnen geïnteresseerde actoren zich rekenschap geven van het belang van samenwerkend onderzoek door inwoners, lokale functionarissen en de centrale regering naar geleidelijke veranderingen in de lokale bestuurspraktijk die door het politieke systeem in Egypte worden toegestaan en door lokale acteurs worden opgepakt.

In methodische zin is met dit onderzoek niet alleen getracht om welbekende theoretische kaders en benaderingen aan te wenden, maar ook om door middel van aanpassingen iets aan deze kaders zelf bij te dragen. De aanpassingen die zich gedurende de toepassing van deze kaders hebben voorgedaan, kunnen worden toegevoegd aan het theoretische arsenaal dat ingezet kan worden om lokaal activisme in complexe omstandigheden en contexten in kaart te brengen en te analyseren.

ملخص

تضم مدينة القاهرة، عاصمة مصر، تجمعًا رئيسيًّا وثلاث مدن جديدة. يقطن معظم السكان في التجمع الرئيسي؛ مما يضغط على الموارد والبنية التحتية للمدينة. تعالج السلطات هذا الضغط بطريقة مركزية تعاني من فقر المخصصات التمويلية، وعدم فعالية أولويات التنمية العمرانية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تعيق البيروقراطية وضعف النفوذ والموارد المحدودة عمل الحكومة المحلية بكفاءة؛ مما يؤدي إلى تدهور أحياء المدينة باختلاف طبقاتها الاجتماعية. تعمل العديد من مجموعات السكان في القاهرة على تحسين أحيائهم وتجميلها كرد فعل على التدهور العمراني. ظهرت العديد من هذه المجموعات بعد ثورة 2011، ونظمت حملات لتنظيف وتأمين وتجميل الشوارع والحدائق والفراغات المفتوحة في الأحياء المختلفة. على الرغم من اختفاء العديد من هذه المجموعات بسبب الاضطرابات السياسية في عام 2013، ظهرت مجموعات أخرى للتعامل مع التدهور العمراني المتزايد والمتسارع في القاهرة. ومع ذلك، يوجد دراسات ضئيلة حول هذه المجموعات النشطة؛ وبالتالي لا يوجد الكثير من المعلومات حول خصائصها وأدوارها وعلاقاتها بالحكومة المحلية. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فهم النشاط المحلي للسكان في السياق السياسي الصعب الذي تواجهه القاهرة فهمًا أفضل. يتحقق هذا الهدف من خلال دراسة أربعة أهداف فرعية، وهي:

1 التعرف إلى الاختلافات بين الأدبيات الحالية حول المواطنة الفعالة في الحوكمة العمرانية للأحياء، والنشاط المحلي في السياقات السياسية الصعبة، بما في ذلك مدينة القاهرة.
2 استكشاف أهداف مجموعات السكان واستراتيجياتها، والتفاعلات بين الدولة والمواطنين التي يُظهرها النشاط المحلي للسكان في القاهرة.
3 الكشف بدقة عن كيفية إسهام النشاط المحلي للسكان في عملية الحكم المحلي في القاهرة.
4 فهم سبب ظهور النشاط المحلي بخصائص معينة، وفي أدوار محددة في عمليات الحكم المحلي بالقاهرة.

نظريًّا، تنطلق هذه الرسالة العلمية من مفاهيم «المواطنة الفعالة» في سياق «حوكمة الأحياء»، والتي نشير إليها باسم النشاط المحلي. يشمل النشاط المحلي الأنشطة والمبادرات التي تبدأها مجموعات السكان لتحسين الظروف العمرانية للحي الخاص بهم. تركز هذه الدراسة على النشاط المحلي في السياقات السياسية الصعبة؛ حيث تكون أنظمة الحكم غير داعمة لنشاط المواطنين في الشأن العام. تتناول الدراسة مسألة عدم وجود دراسات كافية حول النشاط المحلي في مثل هذه السياقات، مقارنةً بالسياقات التي تُمكّن السكان من ممارسة المواطنة الفعالة، أو تسمح لهم بالمطالبة بحقوقهم في المدينة. كما تسلط الدراسة الضوء على أهمية «السياق» في تشكيل دور السكان النشطين في أحيائهم، وبالتالي تُركز على مدينة القاهرة كمثال لسياق مليء بالتحديات السياسية.

من الناحية المنهجية، تستخدم هذه الرسالة منهجية بحثية نوعية تعتمد على إجراء الملاحظات والمقابلات شبه المنظمة. بالنسبة للملاحظات، كان تطبيق «فيسبوك» هو الوسيلة الرئيسية المستخدمة لجمع البيانات، والتواصل مع مجموعات السكان النشطة في القاهرة. اشتملت الدراسة على 18 مجموعة سكان نشطة في المناطق الرسمية، تهدف إلى تحسين الظروف العمرانية لأحيائهم. وتم تحليل أنشطة هذه المجموعات ومبادراتها من خلال الصور ومقاطع الفيديو والتعليقات الموجودة في صفحاتهم على فيسبوك. أُجريت المقابلات شبه المنظمة مع المسؤولين المحليين، وأعضاء من مجموعات السكان النشطة. وقد تمت المقابلات مع 19 عضوًا نشطًا من 15 مجموعة سكان في تسعة أحياء مختلفة خلال الفترة بين عامي 2019 و2020. كما تمت المقابلات مع تسعة رؤساء لمكاتب أحياء أو مندوبيهم من التسعة أحياء نفسها. من أجل

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تحليل البيانات، كان لكل من الأهداف الفرعية الأربعة إطار بحثي خاص به، طُبّق على البيانات المجمعة من الملاحظات والمقابلات.

في الهدف الأول، قمنا بمراجعة الأدبيات العالمية لفهم إمكانية تطبيق منظور وتجارب الشمال الغربي، المهيمنة على أدبيات النشاط المحلي، على واقع الجنوب العالمي. خلصت مراجعتنا إلى أن أدبيات الشمال الغربي ذات قيمة في فهم وتحسين النشاط المحلي في السياقات المرتكزة على اعتبارات حقوق المواطنين في اتخاذ القرارات وقيم التعاون بين الدولة والمواطن في أنظمة حكمها. أما بالنظر إلى بعض مناطق الجنوب العالمي، نجد أن النشاط المحلي يرتكز على اعتبارات سد الاحتياجات الأساسية بأي وسيلة؛ بحيث يكون التعاون بين الدولة، والمواطنين انتقائيًا. وبذلك تصبح أدبيات الشمال الغربي محدودة للغاية في فهم النشاط المحلي في بعض سياقات الجنوب العالمي. لاحظنا أيضًا اختلافات بين خصائص مجموعات السكان النشطة في مدن مثل القاهرة وجوهانسبرج، ومفاهيم «الزحف الهادئ» و«المواطنة المتمردة» المهيمنة على أدبيات الجنوب العالمي المتعلقة بالمواطنة الفعالة.

بالنسبة للهدف الثاني، استكشفنا أهداف واستراتيجيات مجموعات السكان والتفاعلات بين الدولة، والمواطنين في النشاط المحلي في القاهرة. تم ذلك من خلال تحديد مجموعات سكان نشطة من الفيسبوك ومراقبة أنشطتهم وأهدافهم الرئيسية. وجدنا أن العديد من المجموعات النشطة تمارس النشاط المحلي كحق في جودة عمرانية معينة. هذا الحق نادرًا ما يمتد إلى حق السكان في اتخاذ القرارات والسياسات الرسمية بشأن التحسين العمراني. كانت المجموعات النشطة إما مجموعات جهود ذاتية قد تتصادم مع المسؤولين المحليين في بعض الأحيان ثم تنسق معهم في النهاية، وإما مجموعات تطالب بمساءلة المسؤولين المحليين عن التدهور العمراني وبتحسين أدائهم ولكنها أقل صدامية، وإما مجموعات تكتفي بانتقاد التدهور العمراني على منصات التواصل الاجتماعي.

أما بالنسبة للهدف الثالث، فقد استكشفنا الأدوار المختلفة لمجموعات سكان نشطة من عدة أحياء وبأشكال تنظيمية مختلفة، وتم التعرف إلى القواسم المشتركة بينها فيما يتعلق بالعمليات الرسمية لحكم الأحياء وإدارتها. وجدنا أن المساحة المتاحة للسكان للتأثير في حكم الأحياء محدودة في بعدي التنفيذ والإدارة. في هذه المساحة المحدودة، يقتصر دور السكان النشطين إما على دور «التصليح»، الذي يعيد الخدمات والبنية التحتية لوضعها الاصلي، وإما على دور «التحسين العمراني الذاتي» غير المستدام. علاوة على ذلك، وجدنا أنه ليس لمجموعات السكان دور مؤثر في صياغة سياسات العمران وخططه.

في الهدف الرابع، أوضحنا سبب وجود الخصائص والأدوار التي كشفنا عنها سابقًا في النشاط المحلي في القاهرة. وجدنا أن ممارسة الحكم المحلي في القاهرة تتكون من:

1. *موارد* ضعيفة وموزعة بشكل غير عادل.
2. *أنشطة* إقصائية للسكان من جهات حكومية.
3. *قواعد* تقيد مشاركة السكان، وتحصر مكاتب الأحياء في دور إداري.
4. *خطاب* محمل بانعدام الثقة وإنكار المسؤولية.

وجدنا صلة بين القواعد والموارد والأنشطة الإقصائية للجهات الحكومية، والتي تشكل النشاط المحلي الشديد الاعتمادية في القاهرة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، أظهر التحليل وجود رابطين بين القواعد والموارد والخطابات. الرابط الأول يستنكر النشاط الاحتجاجي على الحكومة، ويشجع على النشاط اللاسياسي بدلًا من ذلك. والرابط الثاني يشجع على الأنشطة المحلية الهادفة إلى إصلاح الأعطال الصغيرة في الحي. وأخيرًا، وجدنا صلة بين الموارد والخطابات يثبط من استدامة أنشطة التحسين العمراني الذاتية.

من الناحية النظرية والمفاهيمية، تسهم هذه الدراسة في زيادة معرفتنا حول النشاط السكاني المحلي في السياقات السياسية الصعبة عامةً، وفي القاهرة على وجه الخصوص. على مستوى السياقات السياسية الصعبة عامةً، تخلص هذه الدراسة إلى أن النشاط المحلي في القاهرة يختلف عن مفاهيم وافتراضات أدبيات الشمال الغربي المهيمنة، وكذا أدبيات الجنوب العالمي المحدودة بشأن النشاط المحلي للسكان. تختلف التفاعلات بين الدولة والمواطن في القاهرة عن الاعتقاد السائد في مركزية «التواصل والتنسيق والاستجابة» بين الدولة والمواطن لممارسة النشاط المحلي الفعال في أدبيات الشمال الغربي. كما أن لامركزية الدوافع الحقوقية في النشاط المحلي بالقاهرة يتعارض مع الاعتقاد بأن السكان النشطين يعتمدون على سردية حقوقية في ممارسة النشاط المحلي كحق أساسي. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تُوسع هذه الدراسة نطاق معرفتنا حول النشاط المحلي بجانب وخارج مفاهيم «المواطنة المتمردة» و«الزحف الهادئ» التي تركز عليها أدبيات الجنوب العالمي تركيزًا كبيرًا. فبعد دراستنا للنشاط المحلي في القاهرة، وجدنا أن حتى الخصائص القليلة المتوافقة جزئيًا مع المواطنة المتمردة أو الزحف الهادئ موجودة لأسباب مختلفة، وتتحقق بتكتيكات واستراتيجيات مختلفة جدًا. على هذا النحو، تثري هذه الدراسة فهمنا لشكل ونمط مختلف للنشاط المحلي في حكم العمران وإدارته.

أما على نطاق النشاط المحلي في القاهرة على وجه الخصوص، فإن المعرفة المتوفرة غير محدَّثة، ولا تغطي استراتيجيات وأنشطة مجموعات مختلفة من السكان النشطين، ولا تتضمن آراء الجهات الفاعلة المحلية المتعددة. تُوسع هذه الدراسة البحث الحالي المحدود عن النشاط المحلي بست طرق.

أولًا، هذه الدراسة هي واحدة من الدراسات القليلة، إن لم تكن الوحيدة، التي حددت أنواعًا مختلفة من مجموعات السكان النشطة في القاهرة حاليًا. الكشف عن أن العديد من هذه المجموعات غير منظم يتوافق مع الدراسات التي تشير الى أن المجتمع المدني في العديد من أنحاء العالم ليس هيكليًا أو متجانسًا، وبالتالي لا يمكن اكتشافه أو تعريفه بسهولة.

ثانيًا، تقوم هذه الدراسة على مقابلات مع أعضاء من 15 مجموعة نشطة من تسعة أحياء تتنوع في الكثافة السكانية والخصائص العمرانية. وقد ساعدت هذه المقابلات في تقييم مدى تنوع الأدوار التي تلعبها المجموعات النشطة في الأبعاد المختلفة لعمليات الحكم المحلي. أظهرت نتائجنا أن سياق القاهرة يحصر مجموعات السكان في أدوار بعينها، ويؤدي إلى وجود تشابهات في هذه الأدوار في الأحياء التسعة رغم تنوعها سكانيًا وعمرانيًا. ويتوافق الوجود الكبير لدور «التحسين العمراني الذاتي» في تنفيذ وإدارة التحسينات العمرانية في القاهرة، مع الوجود المنتشر لأنشطة الجهود الذاتية الجماعية في العديد من الدراسات عن السياقات المتعثرة اقتصاديًا. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تكشف نتائجنا عن أن سياق القاهرة المليء بالتحديات يحفز السكان النشطين على تطوير تكتيكات تشكل دورًا جماعيًا جديدًا، وهو دور «التصليح» الذي لم نجده في الأدبيات المتعلقة بالأنشطة الجماعية للسكان من قبل.

ثالثًا، كشفت هذه الدراسة عن أن تفاعل المسؤولين المحليين مع السكان النشطين يخضع إلى الصفات الفردية للمسؤولين، بدلًا من أن تكون مكاتب الأحياء كيانات حكومية محلية ذات قواعد وأنظمة شفافة يمكن العودة لها والاعتماد عليها. لم تؤدِ هذه «السلطة الشخصية» إلى تباين في آراء المسؤولين المحليين حول المجموعات النشطة ومبادراتهم. على العكس، كشفت دراستنا أن المسؤولين من التسعة أحياء يشتركون إلى حد كبير في وجهة النظر نفسها حول النشاط المحلي في القاهرة.

رابعًا، أظهرت النتائج أن عنصر «القواعد» في ممارسات حكم الأحياء في القاهرة هو نقطة البداية، التي ظل المشاركون يشيرون إليها عند التحدث عن تأثير ترتيبات الحكم المحلي على إفراز نشاط محلي محدود لاسياسي وشديد الاعتمادية. لا يقتصر التأثير الكبير للقواعد على مدينة القاهرة أو السياقات الصعبة سياسيًا. مع ذلك، فإننا نزعم أنه إذا كانت القواعد تحدد بشكل عام العوائق والفرص المتاحة للسكان النشطين والمسؤولين المحليين، فإن القواعد في سياق القاهرة تُعد عائقًا للنشاط المحلي. وبالتالي، يصبح تأثير القواعد أكثر عمقًا في سياق القاهرة.

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خامسًا، تُظهر نتائجنا أن السياق السياسي في القاهرة يتسامح مع النشاط اللاسياسي للسكان الذي بالكاد يصلح تدهور المدينة إصلاحًا سطحيًّا دون معالجة ترتيبات الحكم المسببة له. في القاهرة، لا يتعلق النشاط اللاسياسي بتجريد الأهداف المعلنة للمجموعات النشطة من أي نوايا تجاه التدخل في ترتيبات الحكم فحسب، بل يتعلق أيضًا بنوع الاستراتيجيات والتكتيكات التي تختارها المجموعات النشطة.

سادسًا وأخيرًا، تُظهر نتائجنا أن النشاط المحلي اللاسياسي للسكان والأداء الإقصائي للجهات الحكومية قد امتدا ليشملا جميع أحياء القاهرة، على عكس الدراسات والتصورات السابقة التي تشير إلى تواجدهما في الأحياء الفقيرة فقط.

لهذه الدراسة مساهمات مجتمعية؛ إذ تزود الباحثين وصناع القرار والمهتمين بالنشاط المحلي في القاهرة بمعرفة متعمقة وشاملة لرؤى من ممثلين محليين متنوعين فيما يتعلق بسياق القاهرة وممارسات الحكم المحلي الناجمة عنها. على سبيل المثال، من خلال معرفة أدوار السكان الغائبة، وأبعاد عمليات الحكم المحلية التي لا تستطيع مجموعات السكان الوصول إليها، يمكن للممثلين المحليين اتخاذ قرارات مستنيرة بشأن تعزيز الأدوار الحالية، أو تمكين الأدوار الغائبة، أو ربما خلق أدوار جديدة للسكان. علاوة على ذلك، يمكن للباحثين والممثلين المحليين استخدام مصادر النشاط المحلي المحدود التي تتبعناها داخل ترتيبات الحكم المحلي في القاهرة؛ لتحديد التدخلات اللازمة لتحسين النشاط المحلي للسكان وترتيب أولويات هذه التدخلات. وأخيرًا، يشير البحث إلى أهمية -وأيضًا صعوبة- تحويل الإرادة السياسية في سياق صعب مثل مصر. بهذه المعرفة، يدرك الممثلون المحليون أهمية إجراء أبحاث تشاركية تجمع السكان والمسؤولين المحليين ومسؤولي الحكومة المركزية حول سبل التحول التدريجي الممكنة في الحكم المحلي. وهي التحولات التي قد يسمح بها النظام في مصر، وقد يقبل الممثلون المحليون الشروع فيها.

من الناحية المنهجية، لم تحاول الدراسة استخدام الأطر والنهج النظرية المعروفة كما هي فقط، بل حاولت المساهمة في تطوير هذه الأطر أيضًا من خلال تكييفها وتعديلها. فالتعديلات التي حدثت أثناء تطوير الأطر النظرية وبعد تطبيقها يضيف إلى ترسانة الأطر والنهج النظرية التي يمكن للباحثين استخدامها لتتبع النشاط المحلي وتحليله في السياقات المعقدة.

1 Thesis Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is about local activism in politically challenging contexts, with a special focus on Cairo city. In these contexts, active resident groups seek tangible urban improvement within governance arrangements that are unconcerned, and even sometimes against, citizens' involvement in urban and public affairs. This study hence investigates the concepts of "active citizenship" in the context of "neighborhood governance" that we refer to as local activism. Local activism comprises all sorts of activities by resident groups who seek active roles in the urban improvement of their neighborhoods. The study also builds on the urban citizenship concept that expands the definition of active citizens to encompass all the people inhabiting the urban space (Blokland et al., 2015; Painter, 2005; Pine, 2010). Therefore, the active citizen groups are referred to as "active resident groups" throughout this thesis to go beyond the legal connotation of the "citizen" term.

Recent years have witnessed increasing global interest in the role of active residents in local governance. This interest increased as, firstly, the failure of centralized governance in solving local urban problems and the rise of neo-liberal practices (Bailey & Pill, 2015; García, 2006; Marinetto, 2003; Silver et al., 2010; Trudeau, 2012) made the involvement of citizens and non-state actors in governance a necessity (Bovaird, 2007; A. J. Kearns, 1992; Kleinhans, 2017; Yates, 1972). Secondly, empowering active citizenship became proof of governments' support of participatory democracy (Teernstra & Pinkster, 2016). Thirdly, being an active citizen became integral to citizenship rights, making states responsible for enabling citizens' active participation and mobilizing the citizens to demand their right to be involved in decision-making (Murray et al., 2010). Moreover, the "right to the city" concept (Lefebvre, 1996) has called for citizens' right to co-create their city according to their needs. Since then, many academics and social movements have advocated that citizens' involvement in urban management and governance is key to solving global urban problems such as social inequalities and spatial segregation (Harvey, 2003;

Marcuse, 2009; Uceda Navas & Domínguez Pérez, 2023). These reasons cultivated the interest of many governments in becoming more like "enablers and responsive" to foster "willing, able, and equipped" citizens for effective governance and better urban quality of life (Andrews, Cowell, Downe, et al., 2008, p. 492). Among the different urban scales of governance, the neighborhood scale became an important locus where active citizenship practices in local planning and governance take place (Durose & Lowndes, 2010; Jupp, 2012).

Local activism ranges from collaborating with existing governance arrangements to challenging and opposing them (Yip et al., 2019). Activism may occur through institutional channels such as voting, delegation sessions, litigation, campaigning, participatory budgeting, and protest. Alternatively, it can occur by non-institutional and informal means, such as the illegal acquisition of public spaces and infrastructure (Lopez, 2019). Activism can be loud, publicly visible, or quiet, avoiding public exposure (Bayat, 2013). All these forms of local activism are "context-based" (Miraftab, 2012) as they depend on the political, economic, and cultural circumstances and the relationship between local authorities and active resident groups.

Among many urban studies theorizations, the Northern–Western perspective and experiences play a leading role in the knowledge produced regarding local activism (Miraftab, 2012; Watson, 2002). This primacy stands among the broader arguments establishing the need for a "Global South" perspective to develop the capacity to understand diverse cities (Allegra et al., 2013; Choplin, 2012; Mabin, 2014; Parnell & Oldfield, 2014). These arguments called for widening the scope of urban research and supporting knowledge production from as many contexts as possible (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012). Besides the continuous need to understand excluded contexts, it is important to avoid reducing the diversity of experiences in the Global South while drawing general conclusions (Abdou, 2020). Motivated by these arguments, this thesis aims to better understand local activism in the politically challenging context of Cairo. To address this aim, we explore local activism in Cairo in terms of characteristics, roles, and interrelations with existing local governance arrangements as well as how they deviate from existing literature.

1.2 Local activism in politically challenging contexts

A few studies mention the practice of local activism in politically challenging contexts (e.g., Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Gaventa, 2006). Among these contexts, many countries in the MENA and African region whose authoritarian regimes fail to provide a state–citizen relationship built on equal rights and are intolerant to political activism (Bayat, 2013; Isin, 2017). For instance, Meijer & Butenschøn (2017) concluded that citizenship in the Middle East shows almost no citizen influence on the state except informally and through patronage. Local activism in these contexts is problematic, as residents' involvement in local governance is not state-supported. Furthermore, residents' resistance tactics by which they could demand their rights in the city and improved living conditions in their neighborhoods are restricted. Accordingly, local activism in such contexts differs from state-supported local activism in Northern–Western countries (Boonstra, 2015; van Dam et al., 2015). It also differs from the resistive and often confrontational practices known as "insurgent citizenship," which is used mostly when describing urban activism in the Global South (Holston, 2008; Lemanski, 2019; Miraftab, 2009).

Cairo city offers an exemplary but understudied case of local activism in a politically challenging context. Cairo is a metropolitan city in an economically struggling country ruled by an authoritarian regime. Its political and cultural history discourages active citizens from engaging in urban governance. In fact, there are no formal channels for involving the residents in decision-making (Tadamun, 2015a). Additionally, active citizens are cautious when interacting with the state because civil society is under security control (Abdelrahman Hassan, 2011). It is not even expected that local authorities will inform residents about urban regeneration projects in their own neighborhoods (Elkhateeb, 2020). Despite these challenges, many districts in Cairo have active resident groups who strive to improve their neighborhoods.

These active resident groups focus on maintaining and beautifying their neighborhoods. Many started spontaneously on social media after the 2011 revolution (El-Meehy, 2012; Ibrahim & Singerman, 2014). The residents joined these online groups to improve the city and neighborhoods with cleanup campaigns, neighborhood security gates, and local garden maintenance initiatives. This local activism continues despite the shutting down of urban spaces physically, legally, and even on social media (Abdelaal, 2014; Demerdash, 2021; Harb, 2019; Shenker, 2016; Stadnicki, 2016).

Even though this local activism has functioned for years, most of the studies on urban activism in Cairo have focused on initiatives led by urban academics and practitioners (see, for example, El-Azzazy & Zaazaa, 2017; Harb, 2019; Ibrahim, 2014; Zaazaa, 2019). Thus, little is known about the local activism of ordinary residents gathered in less formalized groups who have earned local public recognition through their work. The paucity of knowledge about these groups could be due to the lack of data availability: the government does not provide data, and researchers lack the resources to collect their own. Data availability on local activism is especially limited because the active groups are local on their urban scale of intervention and function informally using social media and communication channels with adjustable privacy settings. Many of these groups seem to avoid publicizing their activities and organizing public gatherings. Therefore, detecting their activities and the key persons behind them is challenging. Also, research related to activism in Egypt's challenging context might risk the safety of researchers and participants (Azer et al., 2019; Sika, 2019). As a result, the nature of this local activism, its tactics and resources, and how its members interact with local authorities are unclear. The presence, however, of these active resident groups is a sign of stimulated urban citizenship at local governance in Cairo. It might catalyze a shift in the culture of citizens' engagement in urban governance in a context hostile to such culture. However, the many knowledge gaps regarding local activism in Cairo, and politically challenging contexts in general, limit our knowledge of the characteristics, state–citizen interactions, and impact of this local activism.

1.3 Knowledge gaps and research objectives

This thesis contributes to scientific and societal debates on active citizenship in neighborhood governance by focusing on the local activism that social media has recently brought to the surface in Cairo. It seeks to fill two main knowledge gaps: a gap related to local activism in politically challenging contexts and a second gap related to local activism in Cairo specifically. Regarding the first gap, there has been relatively little research on politically challenging contexts compared to contexts that enable local activism or at least allow their citizens to demand their right to the city. The contexts of interest here do not support and may actively disable local activism. Even less research focused on cities in the African and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regions. This research focuses on Cairo, whose geographical and historical position combines many urban planning and governance challenges in Africa and the MENA region.

Regarding the second gap, there is no current knowledge regarding the active resident groups in Cairo's neighborhoods. As for the few instances of research on residents actively improving Cairo's neighborhoods, they focus on individual initiatives, analyzing their activities and highlighting their innovation (see El-Meehy, 2012; Galal Ahmed, 2019; Wahby, 2021). These studies rarely analyze the relationship between the active groups and local authorities, nor the interactions that result from or spark such local activism. In the few cases where these interactions are addressed, they depend on the perspectives of the resident groups and lack the perspective of local officials. Indeed, one of the most important characteristics of urban governance in Cairo is its concentration at the national level of government (Sims, 2012). Governing the city at such a high level suggests that local officials have little control over many local urban affairs; thus, it might lead to the impression that their perspective is unimportant. However, citizens have little access to the national level of government, and local officials continue to be the entry point for resident groups to connect with authorities regarding the urban conditions of the neighborhoods. And thus, the perspective of local officials regarding these resident groups and their local activism is important.

The aim of this research addresses these knowledge gaps with four objectives, outlined in Figure 1.1.

FIG. 1.1 Research objectives

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The first objective comprises two phases in the PhD research: 1) to review the existing literature on active citizens in neighborhood governance, whether in the dominant North–Western literature or the activism practices highlighted in the Global South. 2) To identify the variations between this literature and the local activism in politically challenging contexts, including Cairo. The identified variations are the foundation for the in-depth analysis conducted in this thesis.

The subsequent three objectives focus on Cairo's local activism by asking the three basic exploratory questions of what, how, and why.

Objective two is to explore what aims, strategies, and state–citizen interactions local activism in Cairo reveals to better understand the characteristics of local activism in Cairo. Objective three is to unravel how local activism features in Cairo's local governance process. This objective better understands the different roles active residents can play in the neighborhood governance process in Cairo. Finally, objective four is to better understand why local activism in Cairo exists in a particular manner and features specific roles in local governance processes. This objective investigates the influence of local governance practices on local activism in Cairo.

In summary, this thesis contributes to the existing literature by investigating local activism in Cairo, where active resident groups struggle to survive in a politically challenging context. Although this study focuses specifically on Cairo, its results are valuable for other politically challenging contexts in Africa, the MENA region, and beyond. Improving our understanding of the existence, potential, and limitations of such local activism informs us about the challenges and experiences in such contexts. This knowledge is a starting point for policymakers and researchers to understand and possibly better engage with these forms of local activism.

1.4 Methodology and data collection

This thesis was built iteratively: theory development started before the fieldwork but continued to develop during data collection, analysis, and reporting. Instead of starting with a single, fixed theoretical framework for the research, each objective has its own framework. Each theoretical framework is guided by one of the three exploratory questions (i.e., what, how, and why) but depends significantly on the previous objective's results, reflections, and experiences. The research started

from a broad observation in parts of the Global South in the context of Objective One, then focused on the specific context of Cairo in Objective Two, where several active resident groups were selected, and various local activism practices were observed and described. Objectives Three and Four zoomed in on these groups and practices and focused on the perspective of active residents and local officials to explain the reasons behind specific characteristics and roles of local activism in local governance in Cairo.

1.4.1 Data Collection

To provide an in-depth understanding of the nature and variety of local activism and to overcome the lack of available data and documentation regarding active resident groups in Cairo, the thesis is based on a qualitative research approach. The empirical data was collected using observations and interviews. Regarding the observation, the thesis initially used non-scholarly literature such as local newspapers and reports from Google searches to identify and select active resident groups. However, we only found data on a few active resident groups. Most importantly, the search results directed us to the Facebook accounts of these active groups and uncovered many more groups. Accordingly, Facebook became a key source for selecting active resident groups, collecting data about their activities, and establishing connections with them. The prominence of Facebook in this study was expected, given its significant role in the 2011 revolution (AlSayyad & Guvenc, 2015). Social media usage by social movements increases in politically challenging contexts where security and safety constraints impede the organization of collective activities on the ground (Azer et al., 2019). In Egypt, Facebook is one of the few channels for citizens' engagement in public affairs. It is the most used social media platform, with 38 million users, which is 37% of the population and almost 70% of Egypt's Internet users in 2020 (Hootsuite, 2020).

During 2018 and 2019, 18 active resident groups from 13 districts were selected on Facebook and through Google searches. To select them, we adopted a purposive sampling technique to eliminate inactive groups or marketplace and friendship-focused ones. We also looked for groups mentioning content regarding the urban problems of their neighborhoods. The research observed the online activity of the 18 groups to provide as many insights as possible into local activism in Cairo. The observations examined data collected from the photos, videos, posts, and comments published by the 18 active resident groups on their Facebook platforms. The study analyzed the active groups' goals and strategies in the data.

As for the interviews, the thesis used semi-structured interviews for a more in-depth analysis of local activism in Cairo. Interviews were chosen to enable the participants to describe and elaborate on their experiences. Both local officials and active residents were interviewed to cover the perspectives of the governmental and civil society actors involved at the local governance level. At this stage, the study approached the 18 active groups identified from Facebook and Google searches for interviews. Later, three more groups were added due to being mentioned in the residents' comments about the good practices of neighboring active groups in their districts. The groups are either organized as associations, unions, and cooperatives or unorganized. The organized groups are nonprofit with elected board members and predefined goals and plans. The unorganized groups have names such as coalitions and initiatives. When these groups gather many online followers, the founders are encouraged to take action. Many unorganized groups have only one or two fixed members. If available, two active members from each active group were targeted for the interviews. Besides contacting these groups through online messaging the group admins, we searched in our personal network for mutual connections with active members in these groups. We asked these mutual connections to endorse us to the members of these active groups and thus encourage them to respond to our interview requests. Eventually, 19 members from 15 active resident groups in nine districts agreed to be interviewed.

We aimed to interview the heads of the nine district offices where the 15 active resident groups work. The research thus includes the active members and local officials who interact with each other and experience the existing local activism at the time of data collection. In Cairo, the district level represents the lowest local government unit (ARLEM, 2013). The national-level government selects the heads of district offices. These offices manage and maintain local road pavement, street cleaning, solid waste management, street lighting, traffic work, building permits, and local public gardens. We managed to interview eight heads of district offices; meanwhile, the head of one district office was unavailable, so we interviewed their delegate. In total, 28 individuals were interviewed: 19 active members and nine officials.

Two interview guides were prepared with topics for both active members and officials. The questions for the active members investigated the focus of their groups, their activities to improve their neighborhoods, their interactions with authorities, and the challenges they face and how they deal with them. The questions for officials focused on the forms of participation of active residents in improving the neighborhood and their experience with active resident groups they encountered. More specifically, the interviews investigate officials' reactions to the activities of active resident groups, the channels of communication with active residents, and

the challenges of interacting with active groups. Appendix A and B provide the list of topics and suggested interview questions for the active members and local officials.

The interviews were planned to take place during 2019 and early 2020 but continued throughout 2020 due to the impracticality of conducting live interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic's lockdown. The active groups were first contacted on their social media platforms. After knowing which active members had agreed to be interviewed, local officials from the corresponding districts were contacted. Officials could be interviewed only with special security permits and endorsement letters from an Egyptian university (in this case, Ain Shams University) and the Cairo governorate office. Most of the interviews took place face-to-face when COVID-19 measures were relaxed. Two active residents preferred telephone interviews, while another member was interviewed through texts and voice messages on a phone app as they were outside Egypt at the time of data collection. We provided the respondents with a study description and an informed consent form, which they had to complete and sign.

1.4.2 Data Processing

The interviews were conducted in Arabic, and audio-recorded, except for two officials and three members who disagreed with being recorded. The recorded interviews were transcribed, and notes were taken during the unrecorded interviews and immediately afterward to document as much information as possible. Data processing used deductive coding based on the theoretical frameworks developed for objectives three and four. Additionally, exploratory open coding allowed for unanticipated dimensions or aspects not covered by the theoretical framework. These codings are followed by cross-case synthesis and comparative analyses to understand the similarities and differences in perspective among and between the local officials and active residents.

This research took extra measures to maintain the safety and privacy of the active groups and the interviewed members, especially given Egypt's activism context: connecting citizens with the topic of active citizenship may put them at risk of reprisal (Miller, 2018). The respective groups are anonymized and presented with a code containing the group's district and organization type. Scaling up the coding to the district scale instead of the neighborhood scale widens the area that defines the active groups since each district includes 4-5 neighborhoods on average within its boundaries. This broader scale should impede the identification of the neighborhood and reduce the risk of identifying the active group. Finally, photos, screenshots, and links to videos published on the active groups' platforms on Facebook have been

withheld to avoid revealing the group's name or the active member who posted them. Instead, we provided translated examples of posts shared by the active groups so that readers could view the nature of the active groups' posts and how we processed them.

1.5 Overview of the dissertation

This dissertation comprises a city profile chapter for Cairo, a theoretical chapter, and three empirical chapters. The theoretical and the three empirical chapters are complete research papers. The three empirical papers have their own introductions, theoretical frameworks, methods, results, and discussion sections. The theoretical and first empirical chapters have been published as papers in peer-reviewed journals. At the time of writing, the second empirical chapter is provisionally accepted. The third empirical chapter is being prepared for journal submission.

Chapter 2 is a city profile that introduces Cairo. It provides an overview of Cairo's urban context, focusing on its main agglomeration and local governance. This overview could not have been discussed in isolation from Egypt's political, economic, and social context. The chapter highlights the rapid urbanization and deterioration of the neighborhoods as the city's main urban problems. Furthermore, it discusses the reasons behind these urban problems in Cairo's urban governance. Next, the chapter introduces the active resident groups in Cairos' neighborhood, their formation in response to the urban deterioration, and some of their activities. Finally, it highlights the lack of knowledge regarding these resident groups.

Chapter 3 is a theoretical paper[1] that reviews the existing literature on active citizenship in neighborhood governance. It aims to better understand the applicability of the dominant North-Western perspectives and experiences to local active citizenship in Global South realities. The paper reviews residents' activism in neighborhood governance in parts of the Global South and the North-Western literature. Next, the characteristics of active resident groups in examples from Cairo and Johannesburg are contrasted with those in the leading North-Western literature.

1 Elwageeh, A., van Ham, M., & Kleinhans, R. (2020). Active citizenship and neighborhood governance; North-Western literature and Global South realities. *Sociology and Anthropology*, *8*(2), 36–48. https://doi.org/10.13189/sa.2020.080202

The results indicate a variation in the centrality of "right-based versus need-based" and "state–citizen collaboration versus selective state–citizen collaboration" dimensions in local activism in both worlds. These variations are foundations for further in-depth investigation of local activism in politically challenging contexts. Furthermore, these examples were also discussed in relation to activism practices that dominantly describe activism in the Global South. In this regard, we observed some similarities with this literature but also noticed differences. Thus, this observation emphasizes that there are yet various forms of local activism in parts of the Global South (i.e., local activism in Cairo in our case) that need to be studied to broaden the scope of our knowledge on local activism.

Chapter 4 is an empirical paper [2] that explores the aims, strategies, and state–citizen interactions of local activism in Cairo. This paper aims to better understand how local activism manifests in Cairo and its neighborhoods. Building on the variations of "rights-based practices" and "interaction with local authorities" suggested in the previous paper, a theoretical framework is developed to investigate these two elements in Cairo. This framework is adopted to analyze the online activities, published posts, photos, and videos of 18 active resident groups on Facebook. The results were not definitive about whether the resident groups considered their active role in improving neighborhoods as a right. Furthermore, the active residents' interaction with the local authorities is selective, ambivalent, and unstable. The active groups were self-provisioning groups that confront and ultimately cooperate with local officials, advocacy groups that demand accountability and action from local officials in a less confrontational manner, or user groups that settle for online criticism.

Chapter 5 is an empirical paper [3] that aims to understand active residents' roles in the neighborhood governance process and *how* these roles unfold in Cairo. A theoretical framework is developed from the literature on the possible roles of active residents and their representations in the neighborhood governance process. This framework is applied to interviews with active residents and local officials from nine districts in Cairo. The results indicate that the space for active residents to influence neighborhood governance is limited to the implementation and management dimensions. Active residents are confined to being either "fixers" who

2 Elwageeh, A., Kleinhans, R., & van Ham, M. (2023). Exploring local activism in the neighborhoods of Cairo. Journal of Urban Affairs, 45(3), 546–569. https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2022.2125400

3 Elwageeh, A., Van Ham, M., & Kleinhans, R. (2023). Unraveling the role of active residents in a politically challenging context: The Case of Cairo city. *Conditionally Accepted,* International Journal of Urban and Regional Research.

restore existing services or struggling and intermittent "self-providers." There is no influential role for residents in policy formulation.

Chapter 6 is an empirical paper explaining *why* exactly the characteristics and roles found in the previous chapters regarding local activism in Cairo exist. By relating these characteristics and roles with the surrounding local governance practice in Cairo, the chapter aims to better understand the influence of local governance practices on local activism in politically challenging contexts. The theoretical framework combines the Policy Arrangement Approach (PAA) and the "practice" concept to study local governance practice and its influence on local activism in Cairo. The framework is applied to the same qualitative data set as in the previous chapter. The results show that Cairo's local governance practice consists of 1) poor and unevenly distributed resources, 2) exclusion from the government, 3) rules that repress residents' engagement and limit district offices to an administrative role, and 4) a discourse loaded with mistrust and disclaiming responsibilities. Additionally, we found four main links between the arrangement of these rules, resources, discourse, and government actors' activities that influence the production of limited apolitical and highly dependent activism in Cairo.

Chapter 7 consists of an overall conclusion of this dissertation. It starts with summarizing the main findings of the chapters outlined above. Afterward, it reflects on this thesis's theoretical, societal, and methodological contributions. The theoretical contribution is discussed on the scale of the general knowledge about local activism in politically challenging contexts and local activism in Cairo specifically. The societal contribution discusses how the gained in-depth knowledge in this thesis is crucial for scholars, decision-makers, and local actors interested in advancing the practice of local activism in Cairo. The methodological contribution discusses how this research developed and adapted frameworks benefit the analysis of local activism in complex settings. Furthermore, the chapter reflects on the time constraints imposed by Covid 19 and Cairo's data-poor and risky research environment as the main factors shaping the research limitations. Finally, the chapter suggests future research prospects that could either build on our findings or complement them for a more comprehensive understanding of local activism in politically challenging contexts.

2 Introducing Cairo City

Urban deterioration, challenging governance, and restricted civil society

2.1 Introduction

Like many Global South cities, Cairo is challenged to accommodate overpopulation. The rapid urban growth pressures the city's amenities and built environment (GOPP, 2012). The authorities address these challenges poorly due to centralization, lack of citizen engagement, flawed prioritization of urban development goals, and low budget allocations to districts (Néfissa, 2009; Shawkat & Hendawy, 2017; Sims, 2012). As a result, Cairo's neighborhoods suffer from urban deterioration, mostly visible in the poor quality of garbage collection, sewerage management, road pavement, street lighting, public park management, and public space infringements.

Many residents are frustrated by the ineffective performance of local authorities and the resultant urban deterioration. Motivated by this frustration, some residents spontaneously initiate and join social media platforms, where they share concerns, news, aspirations, and suggestions. They translate these concerns and ideas into physical changes on the ground. These groups exist in an authoritarian regime struggling with permitting active citizens' involvement in urban governance. This struggle results from the country's political history, culture, and institutional structure (Lombard, 2013). Even after the revolutions in 2011, commonly known as the Arab Spring, and its momentum toward change in Egypt, the resultant regime is

intolerant to activism (Bayat, 2013). Due to limited documentation, little is known about how these groups function and interact with local authorities.

This chapter provides an overview of Cairo's urban context, focusing on its main agglomeration and local governance. This overview could not have been discussed in isolation from Egypt's political, economic, and social context. The chapter highlights the rapid urbanization and deterioration of the neighborhoods as the city's main urban problems. Furthermore, it discusses the reasons behind these urban problems in Cairo's urban governance. Finally, it introduces active resident groups that came into existence in response to the urban deterioration of their neighborhoods and capitalized on the sense of active citizenship that resulted from the 2011 revolution. The local activism resulting from such active resident groups is the focus of this thesis.

2.2 Cairo's location, history, and urban growth

Cairo is Egypt's capital, the Arab world's largest city, and one of the highest population cities in Africa. Cairo lies within the Greater Cairo Region (GCR), which comprises three governorates: Cairo, parts of Giza, and Qalyubia, as shown in Figure 2.1. On 2,734 km², this region has over 21 million residents, constituting approximately 21 percent of the population in Egypt (Brinkhoff, 2021). Cairo governorate is the center of the state government, investments, and mobility (Sims, 2012). With a population of over 10 million (CAPMAS, 2022), Cairo is densely populated and continues to grow rapidly and uncontrollably (Abdelbaseer A Mohamed et al., 2014).

As shown in Figure 2.2, Cairo is located east of the Nile River. The Ring Road used to surround it and was constructed to transfer mobility around the city instead of being through the urban areas. Nowadays, it is part of the city, and a new regional road was built to surround the city and provide better regional accessibility. Three new urban communities (NUCs) are within Cairo governorate's boundaries: New Cairo, Alshorouk, and Badr. According to the Decision of the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt No. 314 of 2022, The New Administrative Capital will be a part of Cairo governorate. Cairo became the capital of Egypt after its establishment more than 1,000 years ago (El Kouedi & Madbouly, 2007). This long history made the city the economic and urban pole of Egypt and led to its rapid urban expansion. The following part provides an overview of the city's history and urban growth.

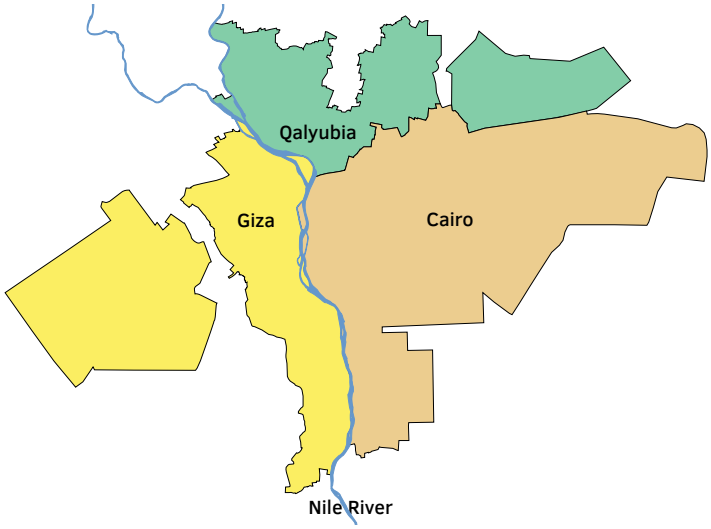

FIG. 2.1 The boundaries of the GCR and the governorates comprising it. Source: Authors using a base map from Thomas Brinkhoff, "Greater Cairo (Egypt): Districts - Population Statistics, Charts and Map," City Population, July 1, 2021, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/egypt/greatercairo/

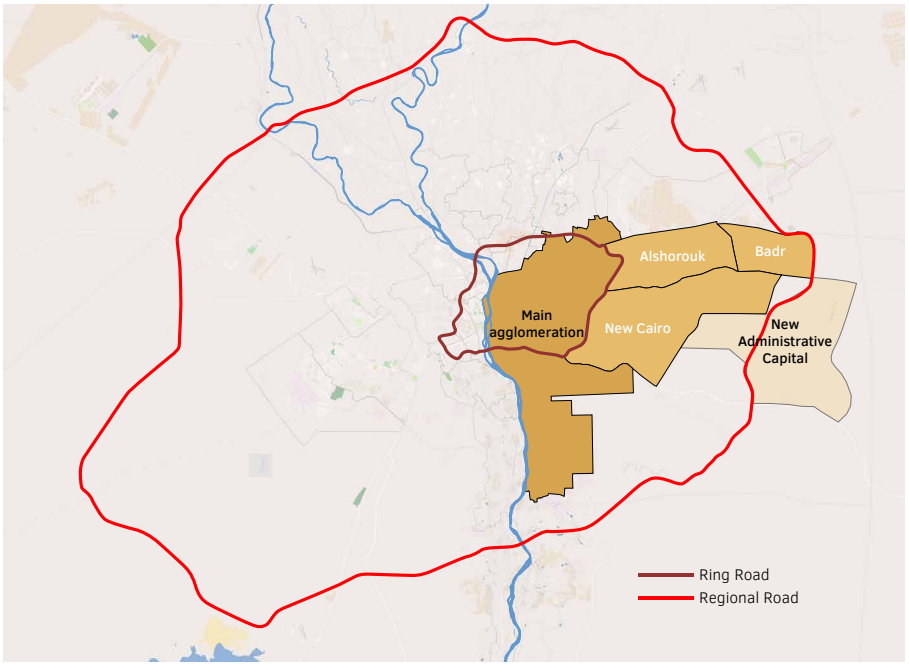

FIG. 2.2 The urban structure of Cairo governorate. Source: Authors using a base map from Thomas Brinkhoff, "Greater Cairo (Egypt): Districts - Population Statistics, Charts and Map," City Population, July 1, 2021, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/egypt/greatercairo/

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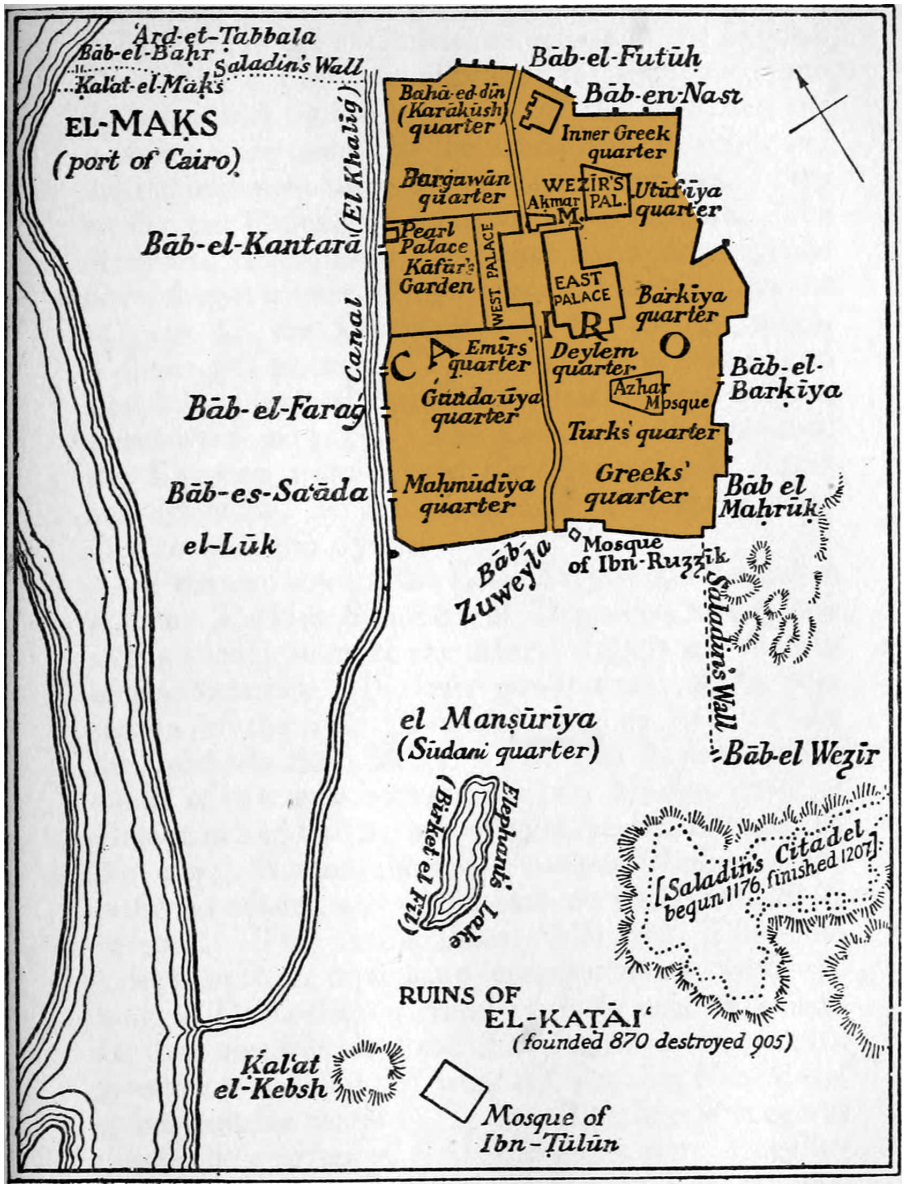

FIG. 2.3 Fatimid Cairo (in color). Source: Internet Archive Book Images (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_story_of_Cairo_(1906)_(14782234955).jpg), The story of Cairo (1906) (14782234955)", Color and text, https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/legalcode

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The city originated in 640 AD in the eastern part of the Nile valley close to the "Mokattam" hills and continued to grow spontaneously under Islamic rule (Soliman & Shraf El-Din, 2000). The main city from which Cairo got its name now is "Fatimid Cairo," see Figure 2.3. It was founded in 969 AD when the city's area was around 1.6 km² (Sims, 2012; Soliman & Shraf El-Din, 2000).

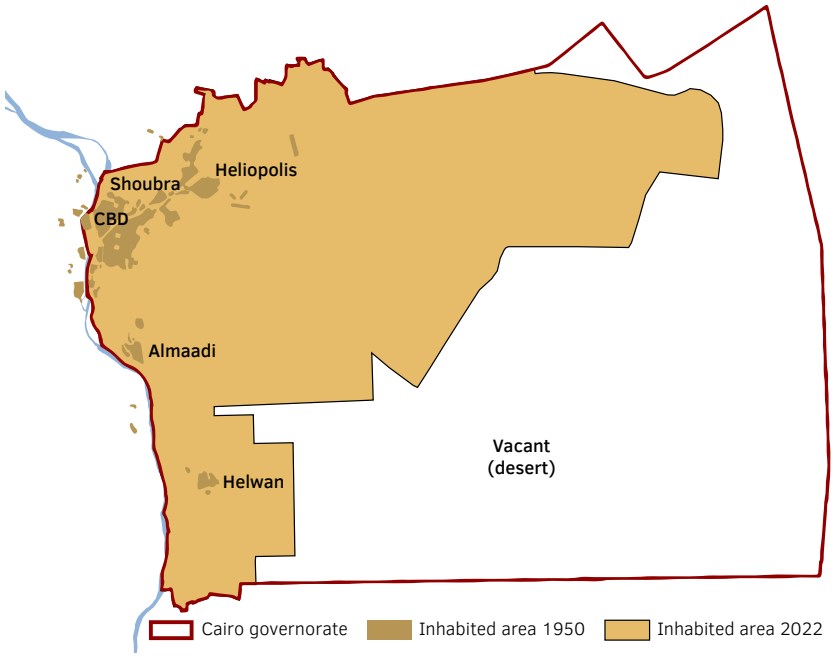

FIG. 2.4 Cairo inhabited area in 1950. Source: Authors based on (Sims, 2012) and using a base map from Thomas Brinkhoff, "Greater Cairo (Egypt): Districts - Population Statistics, Charts and Map," City Population, July 1, 2021, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/egypt/greatercairo/

The city kept growing, and by the 14th century, it flourished under the rule of the Mamluks. It became a major city and was a leading center for trade and architecture (Sims, 2003; Soliman & Shraf El-Din, 2000). By the 17th century, under Ottoman rule, Cairo began a period of decline (Sims, 2003). The city generally featured narrow streets with frequent dead ends, indicating an irregular road network (Abdelbaseer A Mohamed et al., 2014).

In the 1800s, The city continued to grow, gained more political importance, and entered a new era of modernization and economic growth (Sims, 2003). Cairo's inhabited area was 63.5 km² in 1800 (Soliman & Shraf El-Din, 2000). By the end of the 19th century, the first planned area of Khedival Cairo, known as the "Downtown" nowadays, was built to be the Central Business District (CBD). Afterward, the formal expansions of Cairo

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branched from this CBD in all directions along the Nile and to the East (Abdelbasser A. Mohamed & Stanek, 2021). In the early 1900s, several planned settlements were built and targeted affluents, such as Heliopolis in the North-East, Maadi in the South, and Rhoda and Zamalek in the West (Abdelbasser A. Mohamed & Stanek, 2021; Sims, 2012), as shown in Figure 2.4. Most of these expansions were on agricultural land except for the expansions to the North-East that were on desert land (Sims, 2003). The gaps between the CBD and these new settlements were filled over the first half of the twentieth century.

After establishing the republic in 1952, the new regime focused on industrial city development, especially in iron and steel, cement, textiles, leather, building material, and military production (Sims, 2012). This focus created job opportunities that significantly increased the pattern of internal immigration from rural areas to big cities, especially Cairo (Soliman & Shraf El-Din, 2000). Simultaneously, the country faced multiple external aggressions and invasions involving the United Kingdom, France, and mainly Israel. Consequently, most funds were directed to military purposes. With the rapidly increasing population, state of war, and successive unsuitable housing policies, the government failed to provide sufficient affordable housing (Alfiky, 2018). Consequently, many migrants built informal settlements around the formal areas and peripheral farmlands (Abdelbasser A. Mohamed & Stanek, 2021). The informal areas grew mostly on agricultural land, and Cairo's main agglomeration was attached to Giza and Qalyubia (Soliman & Shraf El-Din, 2000). By 2006, 9.5 million inhabitants (around 65% of the GCR population) lived in informal areas over 160 km² (PDP Egypt, 2017; Sejourne, 2009).

Urban decentralization in the form of new settlements and satellite cities gained the support of officials, elites, and planners in the 1970s (Abdelbasser A. Mohamed & Stanek, 2021; Sims, 2012). Since then, many NUCs have been built to face population growth and promise a modern, organized, unpolluted urban quality of life. The successive governments built new communities, resulting in three NUCs in Cairo governorate. According to Cairo Governorate (2022), The total area of Cairo is 3084.676 km² with 188.982 km² inhabited area. Figure 2.5 shows the urban growth of Cairo's main agglomeration and the surrounding NUCs.

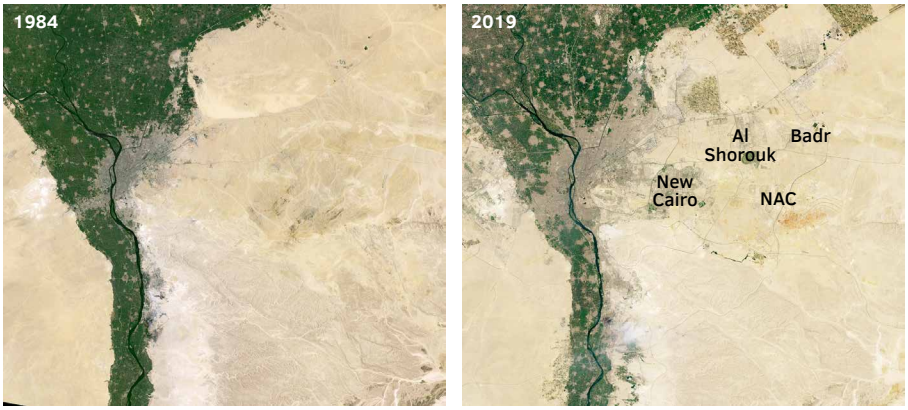

FIG. 2.5 Cairo's urban growth from 1984 to 2019 highlighting the NUCs. Source: (NASA Earth Observatory images by Lauren Dauphin, 2019))

Finally, a New Administrative Capital (NAC) plan was announced in 2015. With a strong political will, a rapid construction rate has taken place since then. The official website of the new capital presents it as the new center for living, work, and visiting. It is located 45 kilometers from Cairo to the East between Cairo and the Red Sea (The Capital, 2015). With an area of 714 km² to accommodate 15 million (UDC, 2015), the estimated budget for such a mega project is 46 billion USD (Serag, 2017). The NAC is part of Cairo governorate. However, it is unclear what the local government arrangement in the NAC would be in relation to the existing local government arrangements of Cairo's main agglomeration and the NUCs.

2.3 The neighborhoods of Cairo's main agglomeration

Gorgy (1985) described the main agglomeration of Cairo and divided it into central, south, west, north, and northeast divisions. As shown in Figure 2.6, the central part is the CBD which has a unique radial urban pattern inspired by Haussmann's renovation of Paris. It contains significant old architectural buildings and is the place of Egypt's central administration, ministries, and Parliament. There is a significant population reduction in the CBD, which is substituted by business and administrative uses. Surrounding the CBD is the old Islamic Cairo, where well-preserved districts such as Gamalia and neglected World heritage sites such as Al Khalifa exist. In the North, high-density districts such as Shoubra existed on agricultural lands with vast spaces for railroads and industries. The Northeast districts of Zaitoun and Hadayek Al Kobba offered middle-class housing in proximity to industries and railway lines surrounding them. To the East, the Heliopolis neighborhood represents a private sector homogenous urban complex integrating different levels of housing. Further to the East, the grid planning of Nasr City mostly accommodates high and middle-to-high classes with few middle and low-class neighborhoods at its informal periphery (Abdelbasser A. Mohamed & Stanek, 2021). To the South, Almaadi, Almokattam and Helwan exist. Almaadi is known as the green district because its streets are filled with trees, grassy sidewalks, and seasonal flowers in its squares (M. Keleg, 2019). The industries fostered Helwan's urban expansion, while Almokattam's growth depended on supplying infrastructure up to its plateaus. Finally, high to middle high-class neighborhoods exist on Zamalek and Rhoda Nile islands.

FIG. 2.6 Selected images of neighborhoods in Cairo's main agglomeration. Source: Authors using basemap from cairo.gov.eg (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cairo300.jpg), colors and translation, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode, and images from (see Appendix C)

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2.4 The basics of local government in Cairo

No central entity for the Greater Cairo Region (GCR) exists despite the many calls for establishing such an entity. Despite this, several public services are operated on the macro scale of GCR with authorities at the ministries' national level (Sims, 2012). Services such as electricity, water, sewerage, telecommunication, public buses, and metro are operated on a metropolitan level. The macro-scale operated services leave the local government units with local road pavement, street cleaning and solid waste management, street lighting, local community support, traffic work, building controls, permits, public gardens, and civil defense (Abdel-Latif, 2013; Sims, 2012). The local government in the main agglomeration is composed of an executive body, besides elected Local Popular Councils to represent the citizens. The NUCs are managed by an agency called "Gehaz," which follows the New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA).

2.4.1 The executive body

As an urban governorate, Cairo's local government comprises a governorate and district levels. One governorate office and 38 district offices represent the executive government body in Cairo (Cairo Governorate, 2020). Governors are selected by the President and mandated to allocate the budget and set priorities for urban development and services provision (Abdelbasser A. Mohamed & Stanek, 2021). The heads of districts are also selected by the central government and are mandated to execute and manage infrastructure and public services within their geographical boundaries (Elmashat et al., 2012). Another subdivision from the district called " Shiyakha" exist (Tadamun, 2015a). However, it is mainly used to facilitate the census process or to organize the execution of national campaigns such as vaccination and local support programs. Neither the districts are divided equally based on a proper urban planning scale rationale, nor do the "Shiyakhas" have a significant role in urban planning. Moreover, residents' perception of neighborhood boundaries differs from the divisions of "Shiyakhas" (Tadamun, 2016a).

Regarding the NUCs, Law No. 59 the Year 1979: Concerning New Urban Communities mentions that after the construction of the new community, it follows the municipal administration of the governorate it is located within (The Presidency, 1979). However, the law states no duration for merging the NUCs into their respective governorate (Sims, 2012). Accordingly, the local units of "Gehaz" have managed the NUCs until now, except for the city of May 15.

2.4.2 The elected Local Popular Council

Parallel to these appointed local executive bodies and until 2011, there used to be elected bodies at each local government level (i.e., governorate and districts) called Local Popular Councils (LPCs). LPCs are citizens' representatives in the local government and monitor the executive government bodies at their level. Officially, they have the power to approve, oppose and monitor the level of public services delivery, the expenditures, and the proposed urban development plans. Besides, they can propose urban development projects and levy taxes and fees within their boundaries (Tadamun, 2016b).

However, the abolition of LPCs' right to question officials and to vote for their confidence diminished the power of the LPCs compared to their counterparts in the executive body (Elmashat et al., 2012). Accordingly, the LPCs were independent and inactive in practice, and their role was more of an advisory one. Even more, Tadamun (2013b) highlighted that residents lost trust in the LPCs' ability to represent them due to the political affiliation of LPCs' members to the ruling party. Additionally, the activities of these councils involved corruption (Sims, 2012). According to Néfissa (2009), the residents were uninterested in the LPCs' election, believing they were corrupted and had limited powers. That was apparent in the 2008 election in which 80% of LPC's total seats went to members from the ruling party who ran unopposed (Tadamun, 2013b).

After the 2011 revolution, the LPCs were abolished based on their loyalty to the old regime. Since then, a new law has been under development that disrupts the holding of LPCs elections, leaving the citizens without elected representatives in the local government.

2.5 The main urban problems in Cairo

Cairo is Egypt's most densely populated urban area, with 52.2 thousand inhabitants per square kilometer (Cairo Governorate, 2022). Population growth is linked with high birth rates and increasing internal migration from rural to urban areas. For instance, Cairo governorate was the top governorate in the number of births, with 8.9% of the total births in Egypt in 2020 (CAPMAS, 2020). In addition, Cairo had the largest number of immigrants among the urban governorates. In 2017, the number of immigrants reached 58,5 thousand, or 8.6% of the total number

of immigrants in Egypt (CAPMAS, 2021). This internal migration is due to the job opportunities and better services people expect in Cairo (GOPP, 2012). This growth had two main impacts on Cairo's main agglomeration: unplanned urbanization and urban and environmental degradation.

2.5.1 Unplanned urbanization

Some areas are classified as "unplanned areas," equivalent to the informal settlements in the literature about informality in Egypt. This classification represents the state's official definition of deteriorated and under-served areas that lack *formal* planning and are *illegally* constructed (Sims, 2003). They are often characterized by structurally sound buildings in areas with infrastructure deficiencies (GOPP, 2012; Sims, 2012). These deficiencies include water, electricity, garbage collection, and sewerage. Additionally, public services such as education and health facilities are inaccessible. Moreover, the irregular land division led to narrow streets that jeopardized the accessibility to these areas in case of emergency.

These areas exist due to a long history of housing policies that failed to deal with Egypt's political, economic, and social changes (Alfiky, 2014; Farouk Hassan, 2012; Khalifa, 2015). The housing policies included rent control laws, low-income housing provision by the state only, and a market-based economy that provide high and high-middle-income housing (Alfiky, 2014; Fahmi & Sutton, 2008; Abdelbasser A. Mohamed & Stanek, 2021). These policies failed to provide affordable housing to low and middle-income residents and pushed them further toward informal areas (Alfiky, 2018). The informal areas became the affordable housing option compared to the costly and rather procedurally complicated formal housing. Additionally, the proximity of these areas to job opportunities within the city center and public transportation network makes them important economic centers for small and medium enterprises (GOPP, 2012).

"Spontaneous Urbanization" is another term introduced to characterize unplanned urbanization in Cairo. It is a wider term, including the aforementioned informal areas as well as floor additions and building extensions in planned neighborhoods (Fahmi & Sutton, 2008). Some of these additions are not licensed, which makes them illegal. They spread due to the local government's poor capacity to monitor and enforce building laws in some cases and to corruption in others. This term also includes the demolition of medium and low-rise buildings and the construction of high-rise ones (above 12 floors) instead. These high-rise buildings are formal as they got building permits from the local authorities; however, they are unplanned because

they pressure the infrastructure that was not initially designed for such densities. Shawkat (2015) explained that this type of spontaneous urbanization appeared due to some neighborhoods' unsuitable land use planning. Single-use neighborhood planning was imported from a Western planning school in areas such as Nasr city and Mokattam. This pattern was violated, and people changed their uses to revive their neighborhoods, raising the housing demand in such areas and increasing the traffic flow. As shown in Figure 2.7, the original medium and low-rise buildings were replaced by high rise buildings, significantly pressuring the built environment inside Cairo's main agglomeration. For instance, the presence of mixed uses in neighborhoods planned for residential use only causes traffic congestion and parking difficulties.

FIG. 2.7 The difference between the originally planned buildings heights (in color) and the current high rise buildings. Source: Authors

2.5.2 Urban and environmental degradation

Cairo suffers from major problems concerning air quality, water and solid waste management, and lack of green spaces (GOPP, 2012). El Araby (2002) highlighted the severe consequences of air pollution on the health of Cairo's residents due to regular exposure to air-borne pollutants. The main sources of air pollution are the lack of environmental control and regular traffic jams. Moreover, there are factories surrounded by residential areas that mostly use fuel-generated electricity. Their industrial emissions directly impact the residents in these areas (El Araby, 2002; GOPP, 2012). According to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, the annual average of Total Suspended Particulates and Particulate Matters in Cairo was 5 and 4 times the annual allowed limits in 2015, respectively (CAPMAS, 2017). Moreover, the annual average noise in areas around roads wider than 12 meters in almost all tested districts exceeded the permissible limits for 2019 (EEAA, 2019).

Regarding water consumption and management, the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP) claimed that water consumption rates in GCR are the highest in the world (GOPP, 2012). Additionally, the lack of maintenance to water infrastructure causes significant waste of water. Moreover, water reuse strategies were not a priority for the state for many years. Poor water management and excessive consumption pose an increasing threat, especially with the possible severe water shortage Egypt might face due to Ethiopia's dam construction and filling of its reservoir (Voiland, 2022).

Solid waste management is another problem in Cairo due to poor garbage and solid waste collection, leaving Cairo's sidewalks and open spaces filled with garbage. Also, the shortage in the designated landfills and the inappropriate techniques of solid waste burial inside them cause air and land pollution and threaten the residents' health surrounding these landfills (EEAA, 2019; El Araby, 2002; GOPP, 2012).

Finally, Cairo has a low share of green spaces per capita. Its limited green spaces are shrinking rapidly due to the continuous removal of green areas to widen roads, allocate new car parking lots, and construct new residential and commercial activities. According to Aly & Dimitrijevic (2022), Cairo lost over two million square meters of green space between 2006 and 2020. This loss reduced the individual share of green spaces from 1.18 m^2 in 2006 to 0.74 m^2 in 2020. These numbers are far below the minimum of 9 m^2 per capita, as recommended by the World Health Organization (M. M. Keleg et al., 2022).

This section highlighted the main urban problems in Cairo. It showed that the city suffers from unplanned urbanization and environmental degradation, noticeable in Cairo's neighborhoods. These problems are reflected in the form of 1) traffic jams, 2) bumpy streets and broken sidewalks, 3) unsafe streets due to broken streetlights, 4) garbage pilling in the streets, 5) deteriorated and shrinking green spaces, 6) deteriorated housing stock, 7) illegal constructions and uses of buildings and 8) public spaces infringed by shop owners and street vendors. The urban deterioration is not limited to the informal or poor areas as one may expect; it is visible in all neighborhoods. Although with varying magnitude, the planned neighborhoods also suffer from this urban deterioration (Sutton & Fahmi, 2001). For instance, local news reported urban deterioration in high- and middle-income neighborhoods such as Zamalek and Heliopolis (Alazab, 2014; Fayed, 2019; Harby, 2018). These urban problems started initially from the rapid population growth in the city. However, they proliferated due to the state's failure to properly address the population growth and manage the resultant urban deterioration. In the coming section, we discuss the failure of the different central governments and the local governance arrangements to address the urban deterioration of Cairo's neighborhoods.

2.6 The challenging urban governance of Cairo

Cairo has a centralized governance arrangement that suffers from defective identification of urban development priorities (Elmouelhi, 2021) and imbalanced budget allocation for improving the existing neighborhoods (Shawkat & Khalil, 2016a, 2016b). Simultaneously, the local government units suffer from corruption and limited resources (Sims, 2012; Tadamun, 2013b). Furthermore, urban governance in Cairo lacks the aspect of "multiple actors" involvement in urban governance due to the absence of channels for residents' input about the urban development and management of Cairo. As such, the culture of residents' involvement in urban affairs is unfamiliar in Cairo's governance arrangement. Below, we elaborate on these deficiencies and their role in the urban deterioration of Cairo's neighborhoods.

2.6.1 The defective identification of urban development priorities

Egypt is a centralized state where the local government has limited power on the ground. This limited power is even amplified in Cairo as the capital city. Central agencies such as the General Authority for Physical Planning (GOPP) dominate Cairo's urban development planning. This top-down urban development strongly prioritizes the urban development of the NUCs and the removal of informal areas.

Regarding the NUCs, the average share per capita in the built environment budget for 2015/2016 is 109 Egyptian pounds (EGP) in Cairos' existing agglomeration and 172 EGP in its NUCs. These NUCs represent 5.5% of Cairo's population (Shawkat & Khalil, 2016a). In the urban development sector, constructing the NAC represents 76% of Egypt's budget for urban development. By excluding the spending on the New Capital, the share per capita in urban renewal decreases significantly to reach 20 EGP inside the main agglomeration (Shawkat & Khalil, 2016b). This remaining share is directed to the National Programme to Upgrade Unsafe Areas. This trend continued in 2016/2017 with a slight decrease to highlight the imbalance of fund distribution and spatial injustice in Cairo (Shawkat & Hendawy, 2017). As a result, the budget allocated to the urban development of the main agglomeration is significantly low, jeopardizing its services and amenities' maintenance and strengthening its residents' feeling of being neglected.

Prioritizing the NUCs is related to the state's perception that NUCs are the main solution for overpopulation in Cairo. Over the years, the NUCs failed to achieve the targeted population due to their high prices, lack of job opportunities, and difficult commuting (Sims, 2012). Nevertheless, the NUCs became a consistent GDP source in Cairo's profit-driven real estate model, a political gain for successive governments, and a safe enclave to protect the state's high officials and elites from possible anti-government protests inside Cairo (Duffield, 2019; Sweet, 2019). Therefore, successive governments kept directing most of Cairo's built environment budget to the NUCs. Despite governments' successive economic difficulties, the available fund was mainly directed to the NUCs (Sutton & Fahmi, 2001). Focusing on the NUCs comes not only at the expense of the dedicated urban development budget for the areas where most residents live but also actively reducing the urban quality of life in the main agglomeration, especially with NAC's construction. The inner roads inside Cairo are being widened, and overpass bridges are being constructed to connect the main agglomeration with the NAC. These constructions reduced the urban quality of the neighborhoods by removing trees, parks, and even residential buildings in many districts in East Cairo (Aly & Dimitrijevic, 2022; Ashoub & Elkhateeb, 2021; Elkhateeb, 2020).

Within the main agglomeration, the state's urban planning entities classify the urban areas as planned and unplanned. This classification fails to include important aspects and properly describe the condition of the built environment. For the state, the areas are either legalized and follow the building codes or not. As we highlighted previously, most Cairo districts have some unplanned urbanization. Moreover, this classification does not consider other aspects, such as the poverty level and the conditions of housing units and infrastructure. All these aspects exist and threaten the "planned" areas also. Tadamun (2015a) reflected on the impact of this classification on the prioritization of urban planning in Cairo. For instance, classifying an area as planned decreases its chances of gaining state, donors, NGOs, and international organizations' support for its development. These entities mostly direct their financial support to "unplanned" areas. For instance, the state funds were directed especially to the informal area under the project "Egypt without Informal Areas" (Alfiky, 2018).

The only state plan published for developing Cairo is included in Greater Cairo Urban Development Strategy (GCUDS) (GOPP, 2012). In this strategy, the state continues to focus on eradicating the informal areas and directing the urban growth to the NUCs. Different relocation and compensation strategies are proposed for the informal areas, and more investment in the existing NUCs is recommended to encourage people to live in them. The strategy for the rest of Cairos' main agglomeration proposes enhancing the city's culture, tourism, and global image. This global image enhancement focuses on branding Cairo to the world rather than on residents' daily suffering from urban deterioration.

2.6.2 Centralized local governance

Many central government agencies dominate the governance of Cairo on the administrative, financial, and planning levels. Governors officially have what is described as "presidential power" over the boundaries of their governorates (Elmashat et al., 2012). However, in practice, services such as education, traffic control, car licensing, and main arterial roads are shared with national governmental bodies (Sims, 2012). The central ministries are the source of staff and funds for the specialized directorates inside the governorate.

Around 82% of the governorates' budget is central, while the rest is from taxes and fees (Shawkat & Hendawy, 2017). Moreover, 55-70% of this budget is allocated to salaries, while the remaining tiny share can be allocated to urban investment (Sims, 2012). In the 2008/2009 fiscal year, governorates could decide on upgrading projects after receiving their budgets. This approach is applied to specific sectors: roads, solid waste management, street lighting, public gardens, civil defense, and local development support programs in health, education, and culture (Elmashat et al., 2012). For such services, the dedicated budget is significantly low. For instance, in 2012, the local administration and urban development share for all governorates in Egypt's total budget was 12% only (Tadamun, 2013a).

This budget is already allocated to service sectors and is not based on programs or projects. Thus, the budget cannot be linked to development goals (Tadamun, 2015a). As a result, the Cairo governorate office has a limited budget and power, which puts the main agglomeration in a neglected position. According to Sims (2012), most services delivered on sectorial levels following the central ministries fairly cover Cairo's formal areas. However, urban deterioration is often related to the service delivered by the local government.

The more the local administrative level decreases, the more difficult it is to find documented budget allocation. An analysis conducted by Tadamun (2015b) on spatial justice could not explain the number of allocated budgets at the district level in relation to area size, population, or poverty level. It argued that district officials often depend on their political capital and negotiation skills when requesting their budget. District offices are concerned with implementing top-down urban policies and plans rather than creating them (Sims, 2003, 2012; Tadamun, 2013; Moustafa, 2015). They are swamped with managing day-to-day issues such as garbage collection and buildings activities control. Even such tasks proved challenging with the spread of urban deterioration, building violations, and infringements on public spaces in Cairo. Not only this, but the spread of urban deterioration, besides the absence of public data on local administrative levels, affects the reputation of district offices that are perceived as corrupted by society (Néfissa, 2009; Sims, 2012).

2.6.3 An unfamiliar culture toward citizens' involvement in urban affairs

The political context of Egypt significantly discourages citizens from engaging in urban governance. This discouragement is reflected in the absence of formal channels for public participation in Cairo's urban development, the struggling civil society organizations, and the blocked public sphere.

The absence of formal channels for public participation in Cairo

Citizens' participation in public affairs is a national duty that involves voting for elections and referendums (The Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 2019, article. 87). With the absence of LPCs, the citizens can only practice this right on the national levels of presidential and Parliament elections. As a result, the only administrative and decision-making bodies on city and district levels are the officials selected by the central government. With this void in elected bodies on the local urban levels, there are no channels for involving the residents in local governance. Accordingly, the citizens usually depend on informality and personal connections to influence local government. Although the absence of LPCs elections seems temporary until a new local governance law is issued for LPCs, it has been over ten years without a new law. Such slowness raises questions regarding the regime's political will to enable decentralization and power devolution.

Generally, public participation in urban planning and development of cities and districts is not common in Egypt. Even the state-led participatory initiatives in urban planning focused on sharing information and consultation only (Stephen Connelly, 2009). For instance, the Greater Cairo Urban Development Strategy (GCUDS) is the second version of a plan proposed in 2008 under the name of "CAIRO 2050" (GOPP, 2012). At that time, the community and urban experts widely criticized this plan due to its lacking of transparency and public participation (Tadamun, 2014b). After the 2011 revolution, the plan was revived with some modifications. Additionally, GOPP cooperated with the UN-Habitat, and a socio-economic impact assessment was conducted to collect residents' opinions regarding proposed projects in their areas (Tadamun, 2015c).

No clear documentation is available for the whole communication plan. However, according to Environment and Development Group's report on the socioeconomic impact assessment of the Greater Cairo Strategic Vision for Development, four community discussion meetings were held (EDG, 2015). Nevertheless, criticism was directed at the workshop regarding the choice of the participants. Additionally, the discussions were to inform and collect feedback from the community on the

already developed plans, which is a low level on the "ladder of participation" (Arnstein, 1969). Additionally, the state is not obliged to act on residents' opinions (Tadamun, 2014a). The NAC was not included in this vision by any means, implying that the plan for a New Capital is driven by political gains rather than urban development. The high pace in constructing Cairo's top-down plan and the NAC is negatively changing the urban fabric of Cairo without informing the residents, let alone involving them in decision-making or planning.

GCUDS highlighted the lack of public participation as a weakness in the current urban governance arrangement (GOPP, 2012). The strategy mentioned public participation and cooperation with the community and private sector. However, no clear framework or approach existed except for mentioning private-public partnerships as part of the project funding schemes.

The struggling civil society organizations in Cairo

Speaking of civil society in Cairo, Sims (2012) mentioned that although their role is apparent, community-based movements representing local needs are significantly low. Néfissa (2009) mentioned that non-profit organizations' objectives depend on the community they address. In poor neighborhoods, for instance, pressing needs such as education and healthcare are the focus. However, middle and high-class neighborhoods focus on environmental and urban upgrading issues such as urban gardening, neighborhood cleanups, and street maintenance. In the past few years, different community initiatives led by residents have been actively involved in highlighting the urban challenges facing their neighborhoods. They are especially apparent in neighborhoods with distinctive urban and architectural heritage, such as Downtown, Heliopolis, Maadi, and Zamalek (Asmar, 2016; Elkhawaga, 2014; Ibrahim & Singerman, 2014). Those areas are classified and protected by the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) as heritage value areas with unique architectural and urban characters and rich histories. Additionally, few urban practitioners produce alternative urban planning and development solutions led by community engagement and integrated urban planning in different districts (for example, Athar Lina, 2012; Cluster, 2011; Takween, 2009). Furthermore, platforms such as Tadamun (2012) and The Built Environment Observatory (2015) produce policy analysis, fact sheets, and resources to mobilize, raise awareness and support the citizens to improve their communities and demand their urban rights.

These community-based and non-profit organizations often substitute local government's failure and LPCs' absence, especially in poor neighborhoods. However, they struggle to exist and function properly as they often face resistance due to power

conflicts and a lack of coordination with the local government (Néfissa, 2009). They also face challenges in collecting data, organizing gatherings in public spaces, and conducting fieldwork without security permits (El-Azzazy & Zaazaa, 2017). N. S. Fahmy (2012) described the state system in Egypt as "Bureaucratic Authoritarian." This system puts legal and procedural challenges to formally establishing civil society groups. Additionally, these groups face internal challenges related to the lack of resources.

The blocked public sphere

Residents' ability to oppose Cairo's top-down planning and the local government's failure to manage the neighborhoods is significantly disabled because the state controls the public sphere. The Egyptian constitution guarantees freedom of expression and grants citizens the right to organize public meetings and all forms of peaceful demonstrations (The Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 2019). However, in practice, citizens avoid organizing collective actions in public spaces so as not to clash with authorities. Such clashes might lead to violence and reprisal consequences such as travel bans, imprisonment, and accusations of joining banned political groups (Sika, 2023). This avoidance is related to the historical political context in Egypt. It is part of the social bargain adopted by successive authoritarian regimes in which the government maintains its legitimacy by providing goods and services to the people in exchange for limiting and controlling political participation (Bayat, 2013; Singerman, 1995). Accordingly, decentralization and public participation in urban planning and governance were not a priority.

Furthermore, the single-party authoritarian regimes in Egypt used repression to maintain themselves. This attitude created what N. S. Fahmy (2012) described as "passive resistance," in which the citizens do not confront the government but rather evade and ignore unpleasant policies. Steve Connelly (2010) highlighted that these state-citizen dynamics in Egypt create a hostile culture toward citizens' engagement. It is a culture in which the active role of the citizens is unappreciated by the state and less claimed by the citizens. Despite the 2011 revolution and the resultant voices calling for a new mode of urban practice (see Ibrahim, 2014), the repressive practices of the regime constrain organized change in urban policies (Harb, 2019).

These repressive practices included the protest law (Selem, 2013), which included unrealistic procedures and restrictions to organize protests (Vassefi, 2014). It is packed with vague conditions that may lead to broad and abusive interpretations, besides adopting excessive and unclear sanctions to punish violations (Abdelaal, 2014). Consequently, it is restricting the right to protest rather than regulating it. Another restriction is the Press and Information Regulation Law which

gives the authorities the power to censor news media and block content on the internet. According to Lutscher & Ketchley (2022), over 500 websites were blocked for hosting content critical of the regime in 2020. Additionally, the law considers social media accounts with over 5,000 followers equivalent to printed news and television, subjecting them to the same regulations and penalties regarding posting critical content. Such penalties include fines up to $14,000 and prosecution for using fake names on social media. With this law, citizens are prone to be accused of "publishing fake news" or "instigating revolt" (see, Demerdash, 2021; Sweet, 2019) when criticizing the government or public affairs in their posts. Furthermore, civil society law bans the affiliation of active groups' members to political movements and prohibits civil society organizations whose activities are considered political or violate public order by authorities (N. Fahmy, 2015; TIMEP, 2019).

According to the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, the combination of civil society, protest, and anti-terrorism laws has expanded the definition of a "terrorist entity" and imposed severe penalties (OHCHR ,2020). These penalties affect opposition parties, civil society organizations such as unions and NGOs, and individuals such as journalists and activists. As such, civil society organizations are prone to have their assets seized and included on the list of terrorist entities.

2.7 Active resident groups in Cairo's neighborhoods

This section provides a general overview of the active resident groups reacting to the urban deterioration of their neighborhoods in Cairo. Despite the challenging political context, the centralized governance arrangement, and the unfamiliar culture towards citizen engagement, active resident groups exist in Cairo's neighborhoods. Motivated by everyday challenges and the deterioration of the built environment, these active residents focus on improving, maintaining, and beautifying the public areas in the neighborhoods. Initially, most of these active resident groups started spontaneously on social media platforms after the 2011 revolution (El-Meehy, 2012), capitalizing on social and political mobilization. The residents joined these platforms to share local news and suggest urban improvements (Ibrahim, 2014). The shutdown of the public sphere made many of these groups disappear (Ibrahim & Singerman, 2014). Despite this, many districts in Cairo still have active residents who strive to improve

their neighborhoods. They initiate cleanup campaigns, set security gates for their neighborhoods, plant trees, and upgrade local gardens. They seem to have connections with local officials to support them with tools (Temraz, 2016).

These groups represent the local activism of ordinary residents who earned public recognition in their areas through their activities. Few studies highlighted the role and characteristics of such active groups. Some studies investigated the tactics of some active resident groups, highlighted their social innovation, and introduced them as parallel urban practices in planning and governance in Cairo (see Bremer, 2011; El-Azzazy & Zaazaa, 2017; Elrahman, 2016; Ibrahim, 2014; Ibrahim & Singerman, 2014a; UN-HABITAT, 2015). They focused on the strategies and tactics of active residents to self-provide for the required management and maintenance of local services in the neighborhoods (El-Meehy, 2012; Galal Ahmed, 2019; Wahby, 2021). The presence of these active resident groups is a sign of a stimulated form of local activism in Cairo. However, due to limited documentation, little is known about the characteristics of this local activism and its mutual relationship with the local governance arrangements in Cairo's politically challenging context. The coming chapters of the thesis focus on these active resident groups to better understand how they function and interact with local authorities and the reasons behind their adopted strategies and tactics.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter introduced Cairo's urban context, focusing on the main agglomeration. We highlighted the rapid urbanization and urban deterioration of the neighborhoods as the main urban problems in the city. Additionally, we discussed the reasons behind the continuous proliferation of these urban problems. These issues could not have been discussed in isolation from the Egyptian political, economic, and social context. In Cairo, urban planning on the city level exists. These plans are developed and implemented through a top-down approach, prioritizing the urban development of the NUCs and lacking public participation. Urban planning on the neighborhood scale is absent except for maintenance plans.

Additionally, the chapter highlighted a dichotomy in Cairo's urban governance. Cairo has a centralized governance arrangement on the city scale. However, many local services and infrastructure are provided nationally and dispersed among multiple actors. This dichotomy is described by Yates (1972) as 'centralist

decentralization.' This combination might help provide services such as electrical and water distribution, telecommunication, public busses, and metro with a reasonably acceptable quality as they are operated on metropolitan and ministerial levels. However, it limits the local government's power and resources, deepening its inability to improve the neighborhoods according to residents' needs and properly manage and maintain local services.

In this challenging context, the national, city, and district governance arrangements exacerbate the severity and spread of urban deterioration in Cairo's neighborhoods. Neither does the central government seem interested in improving the quality of life in Cairo's main agglomeration, nor does the local government have the dependency and financial capacity to improve the neighborhoods.

The successive regimes in Egypt did not prioritize decentralization and public participation in urban planning and governance. Like the rest of Egyptians, Cairo's residents are missing any elected bodies to represent them in the different scales of local government. Authoritarian regimes control and undermine citizen engagement in public life under the pretext of keeping the state's order and security. This attitude did not only discourage the residents from engaging in urban governance but also shaped a hostile culture towards residents' engagement in urban planning and governance. As a result, civil society is struggling to exist, and residents are constrained in their ability to demand urban improvement from the authorities.

Nevertheless, small groups of ordinary residents in Cairo are coming together and forming active resident groups in their areas. Such local activism is motivated by this urban deterioration that negatively affects residents' everyday lives. The presence of these active residents' groups online and interactions with local officials sometimes mobilize the neighborhood governance and local activism in Cairo. With limited documentation, neither a clear pattern of the interaction between officials and residents nor the perception of active residents and local officials towards these local activism activities is closely examined. Accordingly, the chances of understanding these local activism activities and their contribution to neighborhood governance are limited. For these reasons, better insights into these active resident groups and their state-citizen dynamics are needed.

TOC

3 Active citizenship and neighborhood governance

North-Western literature and Global South realities

Elwageeh, A., van Ham, M., & Kleinhans, R. (2020). Active citizenship and neighborhood governance; North-Western literature and Global South realities. *Sociology and Anthropology*, *8*(2), 36–48. https://doi.org/10.13189/sa.2020.080202

ABSTRACT Active citizenship related to neighborhood governance is dependent on the political and governance structures of its context and is, therefore, different in the Global North and the Global South. Local active citizenship is often presented from a North-western perspective, with its own active culture of engagement. In contrast, it is often shaped by an unfamiliar culture of engagement in parts of the Global South. This difference questions the applicability of the leading literature in understanding Global South realities. The paper aims to answer this question by reviewing the literature on local activism in both contexts. This review elaborates on the commonality of "context"; while highlighting the variation of "right-based vs. need-based" and "state-citizen collaboration vs. selective state-citizen collaboration" as central dimensions of local activism in both worlds. In result, we conclude that the leading literature on active citizenship in the context of neighborhood governance is limited in its explanation of local activism found in parts of the Global South. Finally, this review paper contributes to inform future empirical research on how to better understand neighborhood activism in contexts of the Global South. In this regard, the deduced commonalities and variations offer a starting point to scholars and offer dimensions which could be investigated to improve our understanding of active resident groups, and eventually contribute to more effective local activism.

KEYWORDS Active citizenship, Neighborhood Governance, Global South, North-Western, Culture of Engagement

3.1 Introduction

There is increasing academic and policy interest in active citizenship" in the context of "neighborhood governance." Most of the local active citizenship literature in international peer-reviewed academic journals is written from a North European or a North American perspective. This is partly due to the dominance of English language in academic journals (Mabin, 2014; Yiftachel, 2006). But importantly, it is also because these concepts are part of the broader argument about the leading role of the North-western perspective and experiences in urban studies theorization. Thus, this paper argues that a Non-Western and Global South perspective is needed to develop a body of knowledge capable of understanding diverse cities (Choplin, 2012; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012; Connell, 2007; Parnell & Oldfield, 2014; Roy, 2009). Current debates on the appropriate representation of "Global South" focus on the lack of diversity and inclusivity in urban studies (Robinson, 2014) and argue the need for a new starting point from ex-centric locations (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012). This broader argument needs to move forward from abstract notions to answering Mabin's question about "what city/society relationships in the hyper-diverse 'south' elude ideas formed in the 'west' or 'north'?" (2014, p. 27). With this question, this paper focuses on the commons and variations between the North-western dominant perspective and the residents' practices in parts of the global South concerning the specific concept of active citizenship in neighborhood governance.

The "Global North" literature on citizens' active participation in planning emphasizes that its rise is related to the socio-political and economic trajectories of North-Western countries (Watson, 2012). These trajectories are driven by neo-liberal practices leading the North-Western states to take on a role as responsive enabler in fostering "willing, able and equipped" citizens (Andrews, Cowell, Downe, et al., 2008, p. 492). Meanwhile, the Global South – which is very diverse by itself – is different from the Global North in terms of culture, history, and institutions (Lombard, 2013). Consequently, distinctive forms of activism are manifested in neighborhood governance there. A relatively small body of literature addresses active residents' groups in the formal neighborhoods of the Global South. This is especially the case for the unregistered active residents' groups functioning inside *formal* neighborhoods as observed in Global South cities such as Johannesburg (Landman & Liebermann, 2005) and Cairo. The actions of these groups can be related to the concept of "informal tactics" (Verloo, 2017),which means that they exist outside the official channels to practice activism. In this paper, we argue that these practices of activism are not only different from the Northwestern practices in terms of their manifestation, ideology and state-citizen dynamics, but also different from the literature on Global South that majorly links the informal practices of local activism with informal, marginalized and struggling areas.

This paper aims to achieve a better understanding of the applicability of Global North perspectives and experiences to local active citizenship in Global South realities. Asserting the importance of context in urban studies (see Patel, 2014; Robinson, 2016; Roy, 2009), the paper will start by reviewing the context and manifestation of residents' activism in neighborhood governance in parts of the Global South as well as in the North-Western literature. Next, the characteristics of active citizens' groups in examples from Cairo and Johannesburg cities will be confronted with those in the leading North-Western literature. In result, the paper deduces the commonalities and differences in dimensions of activism in neighborhood governance in the two contexts. According to these dimensions, the applicability of Global North perspective in the Global South realities will be discussed. As a final note, the active groups will be referred to as active residents' groups to reduce the politically loaded connotations with "citizens" term.

3.2 Active Citizenship and Neighborhood Governance in the Context of the Global South

This section will focus on highlighting active citizenship practices in neighborhood governance in the Global South. It will conclude with a description of the distinctive characteristics of local activism in parts of the Global South. But first, the paper will highlight the socio-political context that has shaped this local activism.

3.2.1 The Global South Context

It is important to note that the socio-political trajectories are unique between countries (Parnell & Oldfield, 2014), however many countries in the Global South context share aspects of their history, current problems and future challenges. The history of post-colonial authoritarian regimes and inherited traditional planning policies and processes from the North-west, are pinpointed as shared histories (Mabin, 2014; Watson, 2009; Yiftachel, 2006). Yiftachel (2006) and Watson (2009) highlighted that currently adopted economic policies of open markets and globalized capitalism have created social struggles of inequality, poverty, and informality. With

predictions that the future rapid urbanization will be concentrated in the Global South, the inability of its cities to contain and govern this spatial concentration, and its social and economic implications, is expected to become more aggravated (Watson, 2012). Therefore, Global South residents will share an ongoing challenge to survive by whatever means possible. In such conditions, "the companion of scarcity is a complex of creativity, inventiveness and experiment, captured in the notion of the provisional in the relationships and interactions of people in the south of the world" (Mabin, 2014, p. 23). Expanding on the relationships and interactions in parts of the Global South context, the presence of an unfamiliar culture of engagement will be discussed.

Unfamiliar culture of engagement

The idea of active citizenship is based on citizens' involvement and proactive role in decision-making processes beyond the traditional representational practices of elections. This idea requires cooperation between multiple actors, and the quality of the relationship between state and citizens determines the form and extent of activism. The quality of such relationship is what Steve Connelly (2010, p. 335) defines as the "culture of engagement." It is "a set of norms and expectations of what kinds of political interactions between state and citizens are appropriate and possible."

In large parts of the Global South, the concept of residents' engagement is unfamiliar to both residents and states. This is related to the socio-political histories of the Global South, which created a void between post-colonial tendencies of state control and new processes working towards liberalization and democratization. On the one hand, the authoritarian regimes which came into power in the post-colonial period created stability by adopting centralized planning and governance processes based on state-led economic development (Bayat, 2013; Miraftab, 2009). This cultivated a norm of residents' dependency on the state as the sole provider of services, besides a norm of states' controlling and often undermining attitude towards residents' engagement. On the other hand, the more recent introduction of neo-liberal principles focused on economic sectorial development, while largely overlooking the democratic component of change (Bayat, 2013; Yiftachel, 2006). Although local governance, decentralization, and public participation are officially encouraged in parts of the Global South, the essential structural arrangements and attitudes required are absent (Watson, 2009; Zhang et al., 2018). In practice, legislative and regulatory foundations often hinder residents' engagement activities.

Official encouragement of civil society and residents' participation occurred as a response to democratization calls. In such state-controlled context, Roy (2005) elaborated that civil society is mainly directed towards non-political aspects, limited to providing basic needs and substituting the states' financial and service provision retreat. Consequently, civil society acts as a donor-dependent and emergency relief activity (Bayat, 2013) in deprived neighborhoods. Additionally, it is strictly regulated, undermined and repressed by the states (Stephen Connelly, 2009; Kamruzzaman, 2018). Formal local active groups aiming for the physical improvement of their neighborhood beyond the scope of emergency relief, and outside the informal areas rarely exist. Examples of such groups are found for instance in affluent neighborhoods in Cairo (Néfissa, 2009). According to Watson (2009) and Bayat (2013), this environment creates institutionalized, top-down managed civil society, which is neither coherent nor organized enough to sustain and replicate its achievements. And thus, it is questionable to expect, in such context, that a prominent and leading role is played by civil society in effective resident's participation.

These complex socio-political conditions and histories create an unfamiliar culture of engagement. For example, Malena et al. (2009, p. 7) described the state-citizen relation in Cambodia as follows: "Due to feelings of inferiority and helplessness, citizens are traditionally quite reluctant to question (let alone confront) authorities and have little expectation that the voice of 'the little man' could have any influence on government actions or decisions." Accordingly, residents are more inclined to either utilize individual options to satisfy their unmet needs, dependent on family ties, or act as NGO beneficiaries (Joshi & Moore, 2004). Meanwhile, the initiation of collective actions and secondary associations for their own problems and neighborhoods is neither a considered alternative nor a familiar culture for residents and officials. Such an unfamiliar culture of engagement in the Global South is accompanied by recent but deficient state-supported notions for residents' engagement in neighborhood governance.

Deficient state-supported notions of residents' engagement

In countries such as India, Mexico, Iran, and China some steps have been taken toward fostering the role of residents in neighborhood governance (see, He, 2015; M Lombard, 2013; Momeni et al., 2011; Williams et al., 2011). States have supported the establishment of either local government entities such as residents' committees and neighborhood councils or civil society entities such as neighborhood organizations and homeowners' associations. Although such state support may imply a political will for downscaling governance on the level of neighborhood and for residents' engagement, these grass-roots entities face operational challenges and social consequences.

Operationally, many countries in the Global South have adopted static and centralized formal systems of planning and governance that are inherited from colonial regimes (Miraftab, 2009; UN-Habitat, 2009). In this regard, a top-down perspective of city planning through large scale master planning and predetermined land use has dominated large parts of the Global South (Watson, 2009). This is known as the comprehensive/ rational approach to urban planning (Friedmann, 1971) and does not allow for meaningful residents' participation and engagement. Consequently, this urban planning approach is neither successful in tackling urban challenges in the Global South (UN-Habitat, 2009) nor does it allow for multiple actors' collaboration, such as in the postmodern approach of "collaborative" urban planning (Healey, 1997).

The presence of public engagement is not only unsupported operationally in urban planning but also in urban governance. Studies have pinpointed the dominating influence of local government officials on initiation, management, and decision-making in Global South contexts (see, He, 2015; Momeni et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2018). Vague executive regulations make the initiation and functioning of grass-roots entities vulnerable to officials' interpretations and vary between cities (He, 2015). Additionally, the remnants of the states' tendency to control and the financial advancement of the private market outplay the power and autonomy of the grass-roots entities in local governance processes. And thus, the role of grass-roots entities is limited in many cases to nothing more than property administration and management. Accordingly, advancing the residents' role in neighborhood-level governance in such contexts can be considered at the "infant level," as described by Zhang and colleagues (Zhang et al., 2018).

Not only do the operational challenges suggest an inadequate downscaling of "enabler, responsive" structural arrangements, but they also affect the agent aspect of residents' willingness and ability to participate. Two social consequences will be highlighted. Firstly, state-supported efforts to involve residents and to promote local active citizenship can be exclusive to specific neighborhoods. For instance, Lombard (2013) mentioned that the state promotes local active citizenship in poor urban areas as an aspect of being 'good citizens' in Mexico. In Cairo, the state encourages a form of neighborhood associations in the districts targeted within Greater Cairo future vision to maintain the implemented renovations (Alkhalafawy, 2017). These state-supported efforts encourage local active citizenship but are directed toward specific areas and groups. This leads to a public perception of active participation as exclusive in specific areas or by certain sectors to earn their citizenship.

Secondly, the struggles of grass-roots entities and the varying experiences with state-supported channels of residents' engagement can cause an incremental social disadvantage. The social exchange theory (Mohammadi et al., 2010) is relevant in

terms of explaining the circular relationship between local government performance, residents' attitude towards local government, and levels of residents' participation. The continuous struggles faced by residents to participate in local governance under the dominance of the state create a negative connotation concerning the efficiency of grass-roots entities. The struggles related to state-supported approaches towards public involvement have been broadly discussed in the literature (see Murray et al., 2010; Wallace, 2010). Stephen Connelly (2006) concluded that such approaches could be beneficial as a starting point. However, their results have a strong impact on residents' evaluation of local participation. This is particularly challenging in the Global South as public involvement norms are based on fruitless experiences. In this way, the continuous deficiencies in the state-supported notions of residents' engagement serve to stabilize a hostile attitude towards local activism.

From the above discussion, the socio-political trajectories of the Global South reveal a cycle of unfamiliar culture of engagement and deficient state-supported channels for residents' engagement. They create a problematic context for the development of local active citizenship. A context shaped by "counter-production" due to "actions from public institutions that discourage or hamper steps towards co-production" (Kleinhans, 2017, p. 2). Therefore, formal entities of activism in neighborhood governance cannot be presumed to exist efficiently in this context. Alternatively, unorganized, spontaneous, and social media based groups exist in the Global South (Kamruzzaman, 2018). They are active residents' groups functioning beyond the official channels of residents' engagement by creating parallel channels to improve their neighborhoods. It is to this form of active citizenship that we now turn.

3.2.2 Distinctive Manifestations of Active citizenship in Neighborhood Governance

Cornwall et al. (2011), and Miraftab (2004) emphasized the fact that effective participation from citizens expands beyond the occupation of the spaces of community engagement as offered by governments. Instead, citizens create their local active actions and groups. Studying these local actions and groups falls within attempts to understand "citizenship through performance" (Verloo, 2017) by exploring informal bottom-up tactics where citizens actively practice citizenship, and that do not fall under official plans and policies to promote citizenship. Viewed from this perspective, a momentum of activism at the neighborhood level can be observed in the Global South. However, most of the literature on local activism from the Global South contexts focuses on struggling neighborhoods. Examples of such struggling areas are the anti-eviction groups in Sao Paulo (Holston, 2009) and Cape

town (Miraftab, 2016b), the grass-roots activities of the poor in the Middle East (Bayat, 2000), and even the self-developed spatial plans of the Palestinian Bedouins (Meir, 2005). Being located in neighborhoods with such peculiar social, political, economic and legal conditions shape the explanation and justification of these local activism practices. Consequently, the literature on local activism in Global South is significantly influenced by the special circumstances of such struggling areas.

Having said that, we claim that the residents of the formal neighborhoods in parts of the Global South are also influenced by the socio-political contexts there and, thus, develop distinctive forms of neighborhood activism. Based on a literature review, this section will discuss examples of such active groups in *formal* neighborhoods from cities in South Africa and Egypt and deduce distinctive characteristics. These examples reveal unregulated and unregistered residents' initiatives, coalitions, unions and social media groups who actively improve their neighborhoods. They show need-based, reluctant to formalization, and un-confrontational manifestation of local active citizenship.

Need-based collective actions

In the following cases, residents undertake informal tactics due to pressing needs for responding to urban problems in their neighborhood. In Cairo, the initiation of grass-roots groups is triggered by the deterioration in the neighborhoods' built environment (GOPP, 2012) and the failure of local authorities to address it (Sims, 2012). The need for improving the built environment and the quality of life are stated as objectives by such groups on social media (see, for example, Heliopolis Heritage initiative, 2011; New Nozha Residents coalition, 2016). Their activities vary from online campaigns to on-the-ground actions such as neighborhood cleaning up, reporting problems to the municipality, planting trees and gardens, etc. Another radical example was observed in neighborhoods in Johannesburg (see, Bénit-Gbaffou et al., 2008; Landman & Liebermann, 2005). Because of the need to secure their neighborhoods, the residents have organized themselves into unregistered associations and applied spatial security measures consisting of gates, curfew hours and private security guards. Their activities have expanded to include regular meetings to discuss other urban challenges such as neighborhood cleanliness, road maintenance, and even flood control.

A shared characteristic of these examples is that residents are triggered by the failure of local governance to either provide a desired quality of life or to maintain it. This is in line with the two tentative driving forces motivating residents for co-production in poor countries that are defined by Joshi and Moore (2004, p. 41) as "decline in governance capacity" and/or "natural logistical barrier." Consequently, the residents are mobilized from a need-based perspective to initiate their collective groups.

Reluctant to formalization

Another characteristic in many of these local groups is being reluctant to formalization. This involves formalization in terms of attaching a legal status to the groups to provide official recognition, to legitimize their activities, and to facilitate their collaboration with other actors. In 2003, the local authorities in Johannesburg required the formalization of all neighborhood enclosures by residents. However, due to complicated procedures and high applications costs, most of the residents were reluctant to apply and are continuing illegally (Bénit-Gbaffou et al., 2008). In Cairo, the founders of Heliopolis Heritage initiative still differentiate between their unregistered grass-roots initiative for community mobilization and their new formal foundation (Asmar, 2016). Additionally, the New Nozha coalition founders capitalize on the large number of unofficial followers and supporters in its social media group when addressing local officials as a de facto mean to legitimize the coalition (Kader, 2018).

Reluctance towards formalization may occur when the residents are not aware of the presence of a formal scheme for their activities. For instance, in Egypt, it is possible to establish unions on the scale of multiple buildings (MHUUD, 2009), but the residents are often unaware of this. Another reason for such reluctance was discussed by Bovaird (2007) and Bayat (2013) who highlighted the discouragement of citizens and their loss of interest when their collective actions became formally organized. This is particularly valid in Global South contexts where complicated procedures exist beside an unfamiliar culture of engagement.

The lack of official recognition may put these groups in a vulnerable position and limit their activity. In South Africa, the informal enclosures were tolerated by local officials in some districts, while other officials banned them because of technical issues or urban management challenges. Additionally, these informal enclosures were discouraged by political parties and researchers. They expressed concerns about the contribution of these informal measures towards widening existing social exclusion, community fragmentation and the privatization of security quality (Landman, 2002). Although this vulnerability, having a formal status does not seem to be a compelling option to these local active groups. In this respect, the residents are unable to cope with the complicated formal state-citizen relationship. Accordingly, local active groups are reluctant to formalization, and dependent on the lack of surveillance in “soft states” (Bayat, 2013), where informality becomes a product of inappropriate formal processes (Porter, 2011; Roy, 2005).

Un-confrontational survival efforts

The active groups mentioned previously capitalize not only on their informal tactics but also seize possible opportunities to cooperate with local officials through formal channels of participation. Informally, the active members of Heliopolis initiative in Cairo negotiate with shop owners in the neighborhood and encourage them to follow the facade designs codes (Heliopolis Heritage initiative, 2018). Additionally, they raise funds from businesses owners to decorate the neighborhood's main square (Bassel, 2018). On another track, they cooperated with two formal groups from other neighborhoods to lobby for the issuing of an edict to temporarily stop building permits in their neighborhoods (Rania Mahmoud, 2018). Mitlin & Bartlett (2018) mention that residents consider coproduction instead of self-help actions in cases of wide-scale interventions requiring the support of local authorities. This combination of formal and informal methods is applied in an un-confrontational manner. The neighborhood enclosures in South Africa were set up by the residents rather than confronting the local government's failure and demanding its rectification. It is a tendency that residents face their neighborhood challenges collectively but quietly, without getting drawn into face-to-face confrontations with the authorities.

These observed efforts seem to follow Watson's (2009) description of everyday life in the Global South as "survival efforts," in which citizens negotiate their way through everyday challenges in the cities using their perception of survival and depending on existing networks. It is an un-confrontational coping approach towards improving neighborhoods by seizing on possible tactics and strategies.

3.2.3 Discussion

The above section is aimed at uncovering a distinctive manifestation of active citizenship in formal neighborhoods in parts of the Global South by analyzing examples of informal residents' groups in large cities. They actively attempt to improve their neighborhoods, driven by socio-political trajectories in the Global South. Whether these informal groups are represented on social media or are on-the-ground, and whether they are encouraged or criticized, they are part of active citizenship in neighborhood governance in the Global South. In this subsection, we discuss the analyzed groups by reconnecting them to the literature on local activism in the Global South, with reference to two important concepts: quiet encroachment and insurgent citizenship.

Firstly, “quiet encroachment” activism by Bayat (2013) introduces an unobtrusive, un-confrontational form of activism. This takes place through individual direct actions by poor and marginalized groups to satisfy their basic needs, particularly in the growing informal/slum areas in the Global South. These individual actions may have an incremental effect on public welfare. Secondly, “insurgent citizenship” was introduced by Holston (2008) regarding activism in the peripheral neighborhoods in Brazil and was later discussed by other scholars in different Global South contexts (see, Miraftab, 2009; Watson, 2012). It concerns collective, right-based oppositional activities by poor and marginalized self-organized groups. They build on the “right to the city” concept (Lefebvre, 1996) to justify their invasion of or occupation of housing, land, and infrastructure. Here, clashing with the authorities is a part of the process of achieving the goals. “Invented” spaces of citizenship which “confront the authorities” and challenge “the status quo in the hope of larger societal change and resistance to the dominant power relations” (Miraftab, 2004, p. 1) are integral to its practice. Insurgent citizenship activities were spatialized predominantly in struggling areas by squatters and anti-eviction groups.

The groups analyzed in this paper share characteristics with these concepts but also differ in others. For instance, they share the un-confrontational characteristic found in “quiet encroachment.” However, they are collective ones - relying on the numbers of supporters - and aiming for the public good of their neighborhood. Additionally, the analyzed groups are collective and self-organized as the insurgent ones, but they are not invasive. They would tend to avoid clashes (protests, sit-ins or violence) as a tactical coping mechanism. Moreover, Holston (2008) elaborated on a shift in the awareness of the insurgent groups from advocating their demands as “needs” to “rights” with legal terms and lawsuits. This shift cannot yet describe the analyzed groups.

Finally, the informal groups analyzed in this paper take place in *formal* neighborhoods. Thus, they are not falling under the documented practices in “quiet encroachment” and “insurgent citizenship” concepts linking informal active groups with poor neighborhoods, slums, and struggling areas. Although both concepts held notions of (in)formality, (un)confrontation and right-based activism, they are discussed and justified by the poor and marginalized status of the individuals practicing it in slum areas. Meanwhile, the analyzed groups cannot be associated with such status and justifications. They are active residents who although living in formal -legally secured- ordinary neighborhoods, decide to informally and un-confrontationally intervene in their neighborhood. It is a complex reality of interwoven formal strategies and informal tactics taking place by active residents in neighborhood governance in parts of the Global South.

3.3 Active Citizenship and Neighborhood Governance: A Literature Dominated by the North-Western Context

"Active Citizenship" and "Neighborhood Governance" are two terms of interest in policy and academic research, especially in urban neighborhood renewal. However, most of the English language literature and academic research on the active role of the residents in their neighborhoods has been developed in the North-west as most of the urban studies (see Section 3.1). This section aims to highlight the characteristics of the predominant perspectives and experiences concerning local active citizenship, based on the literature, which primarily originates from the Global North. But first, these predominant experiences will be positioned with respect to the shared economic and political forces, besides a widened perspective of citizenship in the North-western context.

3.3.1 The North-Western Context

Economic and political forces

The North-western context has combined political and economic forces in the past decades, paving the way for citizen engagement in local governance. Economically, the global economic crisis, a neo-liberal approach and welfare state retrenchment contributed significantly to the existence of multi-actor engagement in local governance. These economic drivers limit state-central expenditures and redirect the role of the states towards allowing for the conditions of service provision rather than its direct provision (see Beaumont & Nicholls, 2008; van Dam et al., 2015). Accordingly, North-western cities adopted decentralization and local governance - including neighborhood level – approaches (Bovaird, 2007; Kleinhans, 2017). This approach motivates the local governments to diversify their resources by cooperating with private developers and community associations. In other cases, the community mobilized and pushed for this shift in local governance to counteract the consequences of the austerity measures and the failure of local government in supplying for their neighborhoods (Booher, 2004). To respond to these top-down and bottom-up mobilization efforts, the fixed power and hierarchical organization of local governments shift continuously into more hybridized forms spread among different actors (Wallace, 2010). Consequently, economic forces in the

North-western context now allow for more opportunities for residents' effective participation at the neighborhood level.

On a political level, discussions about residents' effective participation attracted considerable interest as a manifestation of modern democratic practices. In the North-western context - defined as developed democratic countries - actors became aware of the democratic deficits jeopardizing the legitimacy of traditional representative practices (Docherty et al., 2001; Marinetto, 2003). Accordingly, the view on democratic practices extended in the North-western context to "citizens' involvement in decision making or their participation in the decision-making processes outside the main elected local government institutions" (Bucek & Smith, 2000, p. 4). This view allows for an increased role for residents at local levels of governance in the form of the civil society (Cornwall et al., 2011). Thus, the culture of engagement in the North-western context is developing in close alignment with the evolution of democratic participation besides, the economic forces towards engaging citizens in public and local affairs there.

Widened perspective on citizenship and its neighborhood-level spatialization

Amid the forces of the North-western context, effective participation in local governance has become a part of a widened perspective on defining citizenship and its manifestation. The differentiation between "active" and "passive" characters appeared in how citizenship is redefined amongst politicians and academic researchers (Jaggar, 2005). In this regard, citizenship has been redefined as "active exercise of responsibilities, including economic self-reliance and political participation. Implicit in this redefinition is a dismantling of the ostensibly "passive" citizenship associated with the post-war, so called "statist" period" (Schild, 1998, p. 94). Building on this, effective engagement and participation became a right that goes together with the basic political, economic and social rights of the citizen. Not only does this redefinition responsibilizes states to enable and support citizens' active participation as a right, but also motivates the citizens to be demanding for it (Murray et al., 2010).

The linkage between "citizenship" as being "active" and "effective" in participation spatializes active citizenship philosophy in local urban governance levels. Kearns (1995) highlighted the geographical dimension to operationalize active citizenship in local governance. A particular focus was directed at the neighborhood level as the most intimate urban scale to which residents relate, are aware of and are significantly influenced by its condition (see Cattell, 2004; Durose & Lowndes, 2010; Farrelly & Sullivan, 2010). In this regard, local active citizenship as a philosophy encompasses the right of effective citizen participation, while as a manifestation it is

spatialized in local levels as neighborhoods. To operationalize this, “neighborhood governance” as a form of small-scale governance appeared as a concept linked to participation and responsiveness (Lowndes & Sullivan, 2008).

The dominant perspective of neighborhood governance is “a set of arrangements for collective decision making and/or public service delivery at the sub-local level” (Durose & Lowndes, 2010). Neighborhood governance is a direct interpretation of decentralization - widely promoted in the North-western context - and provides an arena to strengthen the state-citizen relationship (Chaskin & Greenberg, 2015). Moreover, it entails a crucial role of active residents either individually or collectively in the process of local governance (Marinetto, 2003). This role is also viewed as an opportunity for the community to shift from the continuous failure of central governments to local, communicative, trusted and reliable processes of urban governance.

As described, the dominant perspective on local activism reflects the existing foundations of an active culture of engagement in the North-western context: a culture that is shaped by a combination of its socio-political forces. It is based on a momentum for appropriating various possibilities of state-citizen interaction and a widened perspective on citizenship. These opportunities do not only depend on state support and responsiveness. But they also rely on the civic agency of residents and their capacities to be “willing, able, and equipped” to practice activism (Andrews, Cowell, & Downe, 2008). The resultant active culture of engagement in the North-western context is a synergy of efforts towards participation, citizenship and accountability by different actors (state and citizens) (Tandon, 2002). It establishes an active cycle in which a responsive state will encourage civic culture and simultaneously a vibrant civic culture will demand and mobilize attentive states (Andrews & Turner, 2006). Consequently, in such contexts, the existence of formal grass-roots entities is a significant alternative for residents and officials in governance, and it characterizes the dominant manifestation of local activism.

3.3.2 Characteristics of the Dominant Manifestations of Active Citizenship in Neighborhood Governance

This part highlights the characteristics of the dominant manifestations of local active citizenship and their strong reflection of influences of the North-western context. These manifestations are state-supported, formally recognized and right-based.

State-supported local activism

The importance of state role in supporting active citizenship in neighborhood governance has taken place in the literature. This role revolves around enhancing the relationship between state and residents (Farrelly & Sullivan, 2010) that requires structural and attitudinal changes (Baer, 2007). These structural and attitudinal changes expand the role of the state in strengthening the sense of local activism. According to Marinetto (2003), the role of the state is not only about offering effective spaces of citizen engagement but also to encourage and to incubate the initiatives of active residents. Here, the provision of appropriate spaces of engagement is not a guarantee for collective governance as long as the residents are not empowered and willing to use these spaces by initiating active residents' groups (Beaumont & Nicholls, 2008; Docherty et al., 2001). For that matter, the institutional arrangements extend the state role to be "educational, learning and awareness raising activities which help people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to engage with local decision making" (Andrews, Cowell, Downe, et al., 2008, p. 490).

Building on this extended role, the dominant literature has reflected on local activism experiences supported by strategies and policies developed by North-western states to allow for effective participation. Policies have been developed, such as "Participatory society" (Teernstra & Pinkster, 2016) and "Do-it-yourself democracy" (Kleinhans, 2017) in the Netherlands, "Big Society" (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012) and "Localism" in the UK (Bailey et al., 2015), and the "Localist" and "Asset-based community development ABCD" in the US (Varady et al., 2015).

Additionally, the North-western states have supported the flourishing of local active citizenship by developing funds and capacity building programs on the neighborhood scale. There has been a special focus on state-supported experiences of neighborhood community organization in countries such as; the US (Chaskin & Greenberg, 2015; Silverman & Patterson, 2012) and countries in the EU (for example, Bradford, 2004; Stephen Connelly, 2006; Kleinhans, 2017). Even examples showcasing self-organized communities as "sole deliverer and planner" by Bovaird (2007) were supported and funded by the government (Trewhale, 2018). Consequently, most experiences of local activism in neighborhood governance have been significantly reliant on the presence of state support.

Formally recognized local activism

The active residents' groups involved in the dominant neighborhood governance experiences are mostly formally recognized. This is because the perspective of community engagement in neighborhood governance is the "involvement of citizens in the formal structures and processes of governance at neighborhood level, encompassing both strategic and service planning and the detail of service delivery at neighborhood level, while recognizing that citizens' involvement in other collective activities, such as sports or community service, may lead to attempts to influence public policy" (Docherty et al., 2001, p. 2227). This perspective differentiates the collective activities groups from local activism in neighborhood governance. The collective activities groups are citizen-citizen based, possibly existing informally and focusing on social activities such as playgroups and food cooperatives (Baer, 2007; Bovaird, 2007). Meanwhile, local activism in neighborhood governance focuses on an interaction model between the state and formal active initiative for increased interdependency with local governance processes (van Dam et al., 2015).

By realizing this perspective, most of the active residents choose from the formally recognized channels of activism to establish their bottom-up initiatives in neighborhood governance. Teernstra & Pinkster (2016, p. 58) explained that "resident contestations have been 'channeled' into formal participation arrangements in local decision-making." This appears in the various officially recognized forms of how residents actively organize themselves in the North-western context including neighborhood associations, community enterprises (CEs) and community development corporations (CDCs), etc.

Right-based local activism

Local activism in neighborhood governance has a right-based characteristic in its manifestation. It is a North-western perspective of activism as being a key component in modern democracy practices and a citizenship right. Not only this perspective dictates the previously discussed state-support of local activism in neighborhood governance, but also it necessitates that residents demand local activism as a right in practice and that academic researchers improve upon it. Concerning residents, a wide spectrum of formal local activism groups clamors to be heard and to demand accountability from local councils in the form of neighborhood associations. Such associations showcase a civic culture of residents who understand to a significant extent the "active" component in citizenship and demand it through effective participation (Tandon, 2002). On academic research level, studies have taken place to help assess, define and to face the challenges

hindering the predominant local activism experiences in the North-western context (see for example, Andrews et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2012; Wallace, 2010). These studies have extensively analyzed existing local activism experiences in terms of actors' perceptions and motives, capacity and mobilization, top-down dependency and power frictions. Additionally, strategies of inclusion, solidarity, and stability for effective citizenship in neighborhood governance have been recommended (Cattell, 2004). In conclusion, the predominant experiences of local activism reflect a right based characteristic to the existence of local activism. This is expressed as a well-earned right by the residents besides an expected responsive and enabling attitude from the state and academia.

To summarize, the most prevalent perspectives and experiences in literature reflect state-supported, formally institutionalized and right-based characteristics and explanations of active citizenship in neighborhood governance. They take the North-western reality as their starting point: a context of democratic participation models, decentralized urban governance and activism as a right. This context has cemented the existence of an active culture of engagement in its societies. Consequently, a dynamic between state-supported spaces of citizen engagement, academic research to optimize these spaces, and vibrant civic culture of formal resident groups claiming their rights characterize the local activism experiences predominantly.

3.4 Confronting the Dominant Perspective with the Global South Reality

This section will confront the North-western leading literature on active citizenship in neighborhood governance with the Global South reality. It will discuss the common and the disparate dimensions of centrality in local activism in both contexts as a reflection on the characteristics highlighted previously.

3.4.1 The common centrality of "context" in shaping local activism in both worlds

The importance of "context" in shaping the role of the residents in their neighborhoods is highlighted in many areas of the literature on local active citizenship. However, often the influence of context is discussed while analyzing different neighborhoods within the same city or country, or when comparing similar neighborhood-based initiatives in different but mostly North-west countries (for example, Varady et al., 2015). These studies pertain to the influence of the physical condition of the neighborhood; the composition its population; how external residents perceive the neighborhood (Forrest & Kearns, 2001) and the institutional context (Scott et al., 2012) on defining the active role of the residents. Such contextual influences can: enhance or disable civic activity (at agent and structure levels) (Murray et al., 2010); determine the nature of residents' activity and the reaction of state institutions (Chaskin & Greenberg, 2015). Here, we upscale the centrality of regional "context" as a crucial dimension when approaching the subject of local activism in different parts of the World. Bucek & Smith (2000) and Watson (2009) highlighted the centrality of regional context when comparing the application of participatory planning and local governance approaches between the Global North and the Global South. Additionally, it became very apparent recently when comparing, for example, homeowners associations in the US and China (He, 2015).

To reflect on the centrality of the regional context, the previously discussed local active citizenship manifestations were by-products of the existing culture of engagement in each of the Global South and North-western contexts. However, as the culture of engagement is fundamentally different, the local activism practices that develop differ accordingly. This culture of engagement places specific assumptions at the center of how local activism comes into being and is practiced. Since local activism practices in the main literature are a result of an "active" culture of engagement in the North-western countries, the assumption of local activism to be a right-based, formal and state-supported notion strongly prevails. However, Global South countries have tended to exhibit a "hostile" culture of engagement. It is erroneous to assume that local activism in such different context would have similar characteristics. The above characteristics may only be relevant to a cross-section of how local activism is practiced and perceived in the Global South. Instead, the examples in Section 3.2 reveal need-based, reluctant to formality and un-confrontational characteristics in the Global South. In conclusion, the contextual setting is not only influential at a detailed or operational level, but also the theoretical level (Cornwall et al., 2011). It is a common significant centrality on how local activism is manifested, not only among different neighborhoods or cities but also between global regions.

3.4.2 The disparate dimensions of centrality in local activism between the two contexts

Need-based vs. right-based

As shown in Section 3.3, the dominant perspective on local activism has relied on viewing the activity of residents in their neighborhood as right-based actions. It is a view that assumes the prevalence of a modern, participatory democratic approach in which the active role of residents is an integral and crucial aspect of basic citizen's rights. This view offers the residents a safe net to practice local activism, even when practicing it from a service-oriented rational sometimes. So, although local activism is motivated by the residents' sense of necessity to act according to a problem or need, they can count on a right-based foundation to legitimize their actions through institutionalized, bottom-up entities. By contrast, the analyzed examples from Global South suggest a need-based activity. It is a context in which deficient traditional democratic practices prevail, and consequently, local active citizenship is not a familiar part of the regional perception of democracy and citizen's rights. It also encounters the deficiency of local government entities in managing the "housekeeping" of basic services (Chaskin & Garg, 1997) such as security, waste management, maintenance of public spaces, etc. Bucek & Smith (2000) mention that the role of the community in substituting for public service provision in poor countries is an inevitable necessity. In this respect, the central role of the right-based dimension in practicing local activism as depicted in the main literature is unlikely to be mirrored in parts of the Global South. A need-based dimension is more likely to be prevalent.

Selective state-citizen collaboration vs. state-citizen collaboration

The strong conviction that state-citizen collaboration is central to the active role of citizens in neighborhood governance should be reconsidered when reflecting on the Global South. Chaskin & Garg (1997) highlighted the widely held belief in a "connected, coordinated and responsive approach" towards service provision and social change in neighborhood governance. The issue here is the assumption that state-citizen collaboration is an embedded thought common to the various actors. This is evident in the "state-supported" and "formally recognized" characteristics described in Section 3.3. Such belief allows for the expectation of state support – even if minimal or flawed – of effective citizen engagement and the active residents' willingness to interact with local officials.

The expected state-citizen collaboration focuses on the realm of practicing local active citizenship through "invited" spaces of citizen engagement. These are spaces officially created and/or appropriated to contain bottom-up initiated active citizenship practices (Miraftab, 2004). It is the institutionalized model of local active citizenship whose responsibilities are defined and practiced by laws and regulations and is manifested by formal grass-roots entities. Cornwall et al. (2011) describe this model as the citizens' active acceptance of a state-provided invitation to spaces of participation and engagement. These "invited" spaces rely on state-citizen collaboration and represent the dominant examples of local activism in literature. The "invited" spaces assume a choice between diverse legitimate and recognized alternatives of activism whereby local active groups can choose from and organize themselves accordingly. But since this central belief is related to the North–western context of an "active" culture of engagement, what if the context is of an "unfamiliar" culture of engagement? To what extent do the "invited" spaces represent local activism in such a context? Thus, to what extent is state-citizen collaboration central to the practice of local activism in the Global South?

As shown in the Global South, there seems to be a case of "counter-production" actions from the state. These counteractions make the "invited" spaces of local active citizenship appear to be alone an unsatisfactory alternative (Williams et al., 2011). According to Miraftab (2009), the "invited" spaces in the Global South are occupied by formally-recognized grass-roots organizations to deal with the systems of hardship. Based on this, the examples previously mentioned in parts of the Global South reflect that the active residents' groups deal with these "invited" spaces selectively. In these examples, the active residents' groups can at times be interested in seizing the "invited" spaces of activism by being connected to the local officials and becoming formal. But also, they can decide to be disconnected by being unregulated and to solve the neighborhood's challenges themselves. It is an un-confrontational coping mechanism with the systems of hardship that acknowledges the collaboration with the state while tactically overlooking it at other moments. Accordingly, the role of "invited" spaces in representing the active role of the residents in the formal neighborhoods in the Global South can be limited.

This limited representation entails that state-citizen collaboration is not a central aspect in the global South. Although lacking accurate statistics, it is clear that unregistered local active residents' groups in the formal neighborhoods do exist. Van Houwelingen (2012) presented a study in Japan focusing on a wide selection of neighborhood associations in different cities, mostly with no legal status and no connection to local officials. Also, it recognizes the importance of studying such unregistered collective local activities as they offer a realistic representation of the active role of the Japanese in their neighborhoods. This argument can have

important relevance to the Global South context of hardship. To cope with this context, active residents interchange between connecting and disconnecting from the state while intervening in their neighborhood. This differs from the prevalent belief in state-citizen collaboration as the main path for practicing effective local activism. Selective state-citizen collaboration might be more central to the reality of Global South local activism.

3.5 Conclusion and Discussion

This paper focused on understanding "citizenship through performance" (Verloo, 2017) within the context of neighborhood governance in parts of the Global South context. The subject of local activism in the Global South has been recognized and tackled in recent studies. However, these studies have focused mainly on resistive practices in peripheral and informal areas as undertaken by marginalized and oppressed citizens. Here, we shed light on examples of local active citizenship tactics inside formal neighborhoods in cities of the Global South.

The formal neighborhoods in the Global South may not be facing the severe lack of basic services and the tenure ship struggles experienced in the informal areas, however, they are still suffering from urban deterioration and incompetent local government. On the one hand, active residents have a legal stake in their neighborhoods, aware that the local government is at least responsible for maintaining the quality of the neighborhood. On the other hand, they are bound by a context where local activism is unclear to officials and residents, and state-citizen collaboration is not a norm. This complexity produces active residents' groups who use the "invited" spaces of citizen engagement but also create parallel spaces for local activism as coping mechanisms. To make sense of how these active groups are positioned in the literature of "active citizenship" in the context of "neighborhood governance," they were found to be dissimilar to the conventions and experiences of the main North-western literature. Based on the crucial centrality of "context," the North-western literature is invaluable in guiding and contributing to the improvement of local active citizenship practices in contexts where the centrality of right-based and state-citizen collaboration considerations are recognized. However, in parts of the Global South context where local activism is central to need-based considerations and state-citizen collaboration is selective, the main North-western literature can be very limited in helping to understand local activism.

Having said that, the issue in this paper is not about the importance of the North-western perspective and experiences. It is about the extent of their ability to explain what happens in other cities and enrich the body of knowledge accordingly. At the core of this paper, we neither aim at generalizing the contextual influences nor specifying the resultant distinctive local activism to the Global South. It is a wider debate among scholars but which in many cases acknowledges the diversity within the Global South and the need for a multi-central production of knowledge (Connell, 2007). Accordingly, the ideas in this paper should be perceived within a frame acknowledging the diversity and peculiarity of the urban setting in different countries. And thus, we aimed at shedding light on a form of distinction in local activism in parts of the Global South. By returning to Mabin's (2014) question about what specific ideas and relationships in the South that differ from the ones formed in the 'west' or 'north', we suggested two dimensions; right-based vs. need based and state-citizen collaboration vs. selective state-citizen collaboration. Also, the paper pinpointed the distinctive characteristics of neighborhood activism in parts of the Global South that shaped this variation. This theoretical perspective does not only emphasize the need to improve our understanding on how local communities organize themselves in formal neighborhoods in Global South contexts, but it also informs scholars with possible starting points for further empirical research.

Moving forward in balancing between specificity and generalization in which the context and where the theory is produced matter (Parnell & Oldfield, 2014; Roy, 2009), it is crucial to understand the informal tactics created by residents to satisfy their unmet needs in an un-confrontational coping manner. Their de-facto presence affects the neighborhoods and may have a potential incremental effect on how local officials and residents perceive the role of residents in their neighborhoods and, by extension, their influence on neighborhood governance. Accordingly, in-depth investigation of how these practices function regarding the suggested characteristics (need-based, reluctance to formalization and un-confrontational) is crucial. Cornwall (2002) stressed the need not only to focus on optimizing invited spaces and to redirect the residents to them but also to investigate and understand the "instances of participation" created by the residents with their own "terms of engagement." Only by achieving this better understanding, scholars can suggest how communities in contexts of the Global South can move forward regarding effective activism in neighborhood governance.

4 Exploring Local Activism in the Neighborhoods of Cairo

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ABSTRACT Governments are focusing on building new cities to control rapid urbanization and accommodate overpopulation in Africa. Meanwhile, existing agglomerations suffer from urban deterioration, much to the dissatisfaction of their residents. Cairo is an exemplary case of active residents' response toward urban deterioration in their neighborhoods, resulting from local government deficiencies accompanied by a hostile culture toward citizen engagement. In this context, active residents use social media to share concerns, mobilize each other, and act on the ground. These active groups are likely to differ from local activism practices in contexts where a culture of citizen engagement is often state-supported. This paper aims to better understand how local activism manifests in the context of Cairo and its neighborhoods. We identified active resident groups and observed their main activities and aims. We subsequently analyzed the active resident groups' level of formality, confrontational attitude, collaboration with local officials, and motives. We found that many active groups practice local activism as a right to a certain urban quality within the neighborhoods. They were either self-provisioning groups that confront and ultimately cooperate with local officials, advocacy groups that demand accountability and action from local officials in a less confrontational manner, or user groups that settle for online criticism.

KEYWORDS local activism, local governance, social media, Cairo

4.1 Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the active role of residents in improving their neighborhoods, particularly regarding the quality of the built environment and local services (Bailey & Pill, 2015). Scholars and decision-makers have argued that the active role of resident groups is essential in countries aspiring for participatory democracy and improved local governance (Teernstra & Pinkster, 2016), and where being an active citizen is an integral part of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship (Murray et al., 2010). The active role of residents is a shift from residents playing the role of beneficiaries of services and infrastructure to actors participating in making and shaping these services and infrastructure (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2000). The neighborhoods are the geographical level to operationalize active citizenship in local governance (Durose & Lowndes, 2010; A. Kearns, 1995). Accordingly, "local activism" encompasses the right of citizens to have an active role in improving the urban environment and is spatialized at the local level of neighborhoods. Contexts with a supportive culture toward citizen engagement produce practices of local activism that thrive on a collaborative relationship between state and residents (Elwageeh et al., 2020). Even though citizens in these contexts may face obstacles to engage in local governance, these obstacles exist within regimes that mostly foster local activism beyond traditional election processes (Boonstra, 2015).

However, many Global South regimes struggle to permit active citizens to engage in local governance. This struggle results from such countries' unique political histories, cultures, and institutional structures (Lombard, 2013). Many countries in the MENA and African region share a history of colonialism (Isin, 2017; Miraftab, 2012) and authoritarian post-dependency regimes. These regimes failed to provide a state-citizen relationship built on equal rights. Meijer & Butenschøn (2017) concluded that citizenship regimes resulting from this historical state-citizen relationship in North African countries show almost no influence of citizens on the state except through informality and patronage. Even after the revolutions in 2011, commonly known as the Arab Spring, and its momentum toward change in North African countries, the resultant regimes are intolerant to political activism (Bayat, 2013).

Cairo city represents an exemplary case of a context that discourages active citizens from engaging in urban governance. Cairo is a metropolitan city in an economically struggling and politically transitional country. Its geographical and historical position combines the urban planning and governance challenges found

in North Africa. Regarding local governance, no formal channels for involving the residents in decision-making exist (Tadamun, 2015a). Additionally, citizens are usually cautious when interacting with the state because civil society is contained and controlled (Abdelrahman Hassan, 2011). For instance, planned gatherings of residents' groups in public spaces without security permits are not allowed, regardless of their purpose. Even informing the residents about urban regeneration projects in their neighborhoods is unfamiliar to local authorities (Elkhateeb, 2020). Concerning urban planning and management, citizens are usually frustrated by the ineffective performance of local authorities due to corruption, centralization, and lack of resources (Néfissa, 2009). As a result, Cairo's neighborhoods, regardless of their socio-economic level, suffer from urban deterioration in their buildings, public spaces, infrastructure, and services (Mahmoud, 2015). The aforementioned state-citizen dynamics in Egypt create what Connelly (2010) described as a hostile culture toward citizen engagement, in which public participation in urban planning and governance is unappreciated and undermined by the state and many citizens.

Despite the significantly poor support for citizens' engagement in the urban governance of Cairo's neighborhoods, active resident groups exist in many neighborhoods. These active groups reveal the different practices of local activism that may exist in a context with a problematic state-citizen relationship. Due to limited documentation, little is known about how these groups function and interact with local authorities. Accordingly, the chances of understanding the contribution of these active groups to neighborhood governance in such contexts are limited. For these reasons, better insights into the state-citizen dynamic and its impact on the active role of residents in a problematic context as Cairo contribute to understanding local activism within an African context.

This paper aims to better understand how local activism manifests itself in the context of Cairo and its neighborhoods. To achieve this, we develop a framework to analyze the activities and strategies of active resident groups in the context of a deficient local government and a lack of a culture of citizen engagement in local governance. The dimensions in the framework are deduced from the literature on local activism and contextualized to Cairo's context. The empirical section explores how active resident groups in Cairo express themselves and interact with local officials. Finally, we reflect on local activism in Cairo's neighborhoods and its possible impacts on local urban governance.

4.2 Urban Deterioration and State-citizen Relationships in Cairo Neighborhoods

Cairo governorate is one of Greater Cairo's (GC) three governorates (Cairo, Giza, and Qalyubia), which shape the metropolitan city. Cairo is the center of the state's government, investments, mobility, and population (Sims, 2012). However, it also shares with many capital cities in Africa the problems of poverty, urban degradation, and overpopulation (UN-Habitat, 2014). Cairo's neighborhoods suffer from urban deterioration due to unplanned urban growth that pressures the amenities and built environment. Moreover, they lack adequate maintenance and urban management of infrastructure and public services.

Urban deterioration in Cairo's neighborhoods includes 1) unmaintained streets and sidewalks, 2) unsafe streets due to broken lighting poles, 3) health risks and pollution from the garbage in the streets, 4) deteriorated local parks, and 5) infringements on public spaces by shop owners and street vendors (GOPP, 2012). Several public services are operated at a macro scale in GC, such as electrical distribution, water, sewage, telecommunication, public buses, and metro (Sims, 2012). District local government units are responsible for local road pavement, street cleaning, solid waste management, street lighting, local community support, traffic work, building permits, maintenance and improvement of local public gardens, and civil defense (Abdel-Latif, 2013). Based on this services' distribution, most of the urban deterioration and residents' complaints target the quality of services delivered on the scale of districts.

The scale of districts in Cairo represents the lowest local administration unit in Cairo. Sims (2012) mentioned the limited financial capacity as an important reason that diminishes district units' capacity in urban management. GC has the highest absolute funding in the built environment budget in Egypt. However, around 75 percent of this budget goes to the new urban communities (NUCs) that contain only 8 percent of the population in GC (Shawkat & Khalil, 2016a, 2016b). Many NUCs were built to face rapid population growth; however, they failed due to their high prices, lacking job opportunities, and the difficulty of commuting (Sims, 2014). Nevertheless, the NUCs became a consistent source of GDP in Cairo's profit-driven real estate model and a quick political gain for successive governments (Duffield, 2019). Therefore, the government directs most of the funds to the NUCs, jeopardizing the maintenance of services and amenities in the main agglomeration of Cairo and strengthening its residents' feeling of being neglected.

The local government lacks a formal channel for residents' input about urban development and neighborhood maintenance plans. At the district level, there used to be elected Local Popular Councils (LPCs) to represent the residents (ARLEM, 2013), but these were dismantled following the 2011 revolution. As a result, the government-appointed district officials are the only stakeholder on the local level who decide and execute the yearly development plan of districts (Braneya & Fouda, 2019). In the absence of LPCs, the citizens depend on informality and personal connections to influence local governance. Although this condition seems temporary until a new local governance law is issued for LPCs, residents' opinions regarding the urban governance and management of the neighborhoods do not seem important to the authorities (for example, see Sayed, 2021).

What channels are available for the residents in Cairo to play an active role in the urban development of their neighborhoods? The active resident groups in Cairo focus on improving, maintaining, and beautifying the public areas. Motivated by everyday challenges and the deterioration of the built environment, the residents spontaneously initiate and join social media platforms, where they share concerns, news, aspirations, and suggestions. They translate these concerns and ideas into physical changes such as cleanup campaigns, setting security gates for their neighborhoods, planting trees, and upgrading local gardens.

4.3 Theoretical Framework

Literature usually considers local activism as the ability of residents to argue their urban needs and challenges in the forms of unrealized social, economic, or cultural rights (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2000; Murray et al., 2010). To demand these rights, different forms of coordination, connection, and interaction between active groups of citizens and decision-makers take place (Chaskin & Garg, 1997). However, Elwageeh et al. (2020) suggested that the element of "rights-based practices" is not necessarily central to how local activism is manifested in parts of the Global South. Also, the active groups may view the element of "interaction with local authorities" as an unsatisfactory alternative while solving the neighborhood's challenges themselves. This section investigates the elements of "rights-based practices" and "interaction with local authorities" in local activism. We derive specific dimensions from literature to help investigate these two elements in Cairo.

4.3.1 Element one: local activism is practiced as a right

Holston (2011) argued that residents' ability to understand their needs as rights of citizenship and to demand them is reflected in the actions adopted and arguments articulated by active resident groups. In the articulated arguments, the rights component can be detected in how active groups express their demands as a privileged, contributor, or constitutional right. The "rights" expression appears in active groups' aims and conversations. So besides investigating how movements use the "rights" term to express their demands, how should researchers examine the rights component in the actions of active resident groups in a specific context?

Based on the "exit-voice-loyalty" concept by Hirschman (1970), residents unsatisfied with the quality of life in their neighborhood have three general strategies: 1) quietly adapt to the situation (i.e., loyalty), 2) attempt to improve the neighborhood (voice) or 3) geographically leave the neighborhood (exit). Here, we focus on the residents who stay and attempt to collectively change and improve their neighborhood, performing "voice" strategies (Shinohara, 2018). The voice strategies are achieved through public hearings, public campaigns, signing petitions, and protests (Dekker & Bolt, 2015). Voice relies on residents' persistent efforts to pressure the authorities to improve the source of dissatisfaction. Voice solutions are political actions, and a rights-based component is integrated into them (Chisholm et al., 2016).

Instead of a straightforward "exit" from the neighborhood, we found the notion of "internal exit," which was introduced by Dowding & John (2008) to describe exiting the deteriorated local service in the neighborhood without exiting the neighborhood itself. In terms of services, the residents can internally exit by moving from one public service provider to another or a private one. An example of collective internal exit is using private security companies to secure the neighborhood. These internal-exit solutions are collective self-help strategies (Mitlin, 2008) through which the residents fill the gap between their collective needs and the provided quality of services and facilities (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2000). Such self-help solutions are apolitical active actions, as the residents choose to improve their neighborhoods without concerning themselves much with the broader political implications (Mitlin, 2008). In this sense, internal-exit solutions are not a loud expression of rights-based activism. They are non-state-targeting solutions (Kruks-Wisner, 2018) since the solution to the problem is not argued as an unrealized right and is not demanded from the state.

A single solution can either be voice or internal exit; however, an individual or a group can combine voice and internal-exit solutions (see van der Land & Doff, 2010). Some active resident groups combine self-help and claim-making solutions to respond to different urban challenges in their neighborhoods. The active resident groups adopt

this combination to increase their chances of achievement (Mitlin, 2008). Also, this combination reflects that these groups articulate their contribution to improving the neighborhoods as a right. In conclusion, the solutions and articulations adopted by the active residents reflect how far the residents perceive local activism as a citizen right in their context. Thus, to explore the right-based component in the practice of local activism, we examine 1) where the "adopted solutions" of the active resident groups stand regarding being a voice, internal exit, or a combination of the two, and 2) the "aims" articulated by the resident groups.

4.3.2 Element two: the interaction between local activism and local authorities

There is an emphasis on the importance of interaction and connection between authorities and residents for efficient service provision. Such emphasis gave a prominent role to the authorities in supporting activism in neighborhood governance in the literature (Farrelly & Sullivan, 2010; Varady et al., 2015). Therefore, the authorities' role is not only about offering spaces for citizens to engage in governance but also about encouraging and incubating active residents' initiatives (Hilder, 2010).

However, if the context does not encourage an active role of citizens in local governance, local activism will be practiced either in disconnection from authorities or in a selective manner. Elwageeh et al. (2020) described three dimensions to the tendency of some active resident groups to 1) avoid official recognition through formalization, 2) evade collaboration with authorities in their activities, and 3) avoid confrontation with authorities when demanding urban improvement. Next, we discuss these dimensions in general and their specific relevance in the context of Cairo city.

The official recognition of active resident groups

By officially recognized active resident groups, we mean the groups whose presence, practices, and involvement in the neighborhood are recognized by government entities. But why is official recognition important? The active resident groups involved in neighborhood governance are expected to practice governance mechanisms, such as decision-making and service production. Van Dam et al. (2015) showed that governmental entities grant support and permissions to officially-recognized citizen initiatives rather than those lacking recognition. This official recognition facilitates the active groups' connection with authorities and helps them

realize their activities. Official recognition may imply that the active resident group represents a wider group of residents to a certain extent; thus, their actions and demands could be either representative, legitimate, or both.

Fundamentally, active resident groups gain official recognition by acquiring legal status. They institutionalize themselves by registering to one of the organizational and regulatory forms created by the state to contain bottom-up groups (Cornwall et al., 2011), such as residents' associations, unions, and cooperatives. Active resident groups, especially in the Global South, do not solely depend on the organizational and regulatory forms created by the state to contain their initiatives and local activism (Williams et al., 2011) but also adopt informal tactics. They capitalize on the personal connections and ties of the group members to be officially recognized and thus facilitate achieving their goals (Berenschot & Van Klinken, 2018). Another tactic is to capitalize on the power of social media to draw public and official attention to a particular cause or goal (Azer et al., 2019).

From the above discussion, gaining official recognition can empower the active resident groups, validate their representation, and facilitate their actions toward improving the neighborhood. However, several internal and external challenges discourage the active groups from choosing official recognition options that require abiding by the government's organizational framework. Thus, the tendency to avoid formalization is reflected in the "formal status" of the active resident groups.

The collaboration of active resident groups with authorities

Collaboration involves two or more entities working jointly toward a common goal (Carnwell & Carson, 2009; Frey et al., 2006). Collaboration provides effectiveness, efficiency, and quality to social and public services provision and delivery (McNamara, 2012). Moreover, collaboration enables active residents to achieve their grass-root interventions and thus encourages local activism practices (Andrews & Turner, 2006). However, initiating and maintaining collaborations is challenging regarding the needed time, skills, and shift in working culture (Keast et al., 2007). Therefore, collaboration can only exist when the authorities and the active resident group value the potential benefits above the required efforts (Himmelman, 2001).

The collaboration between local authorities and active resident groups has many levels and manifestations. Many scholars defined these levels as "levels of integration" (Konrad, 1996), "collaboration continuum" (McNamara, 2012), "stages of collaboration" (Frey et al., 2006), and "3Cs" (Keast et al., 2007). Such continuums define the intensity of collaboration by breaking down the joint actions into defined

classifications. We noticed common aspects in defining these classifications: the type of shared resource and actors' roles. Therefore, we propose observing these two aspects in the activities of active groups. They can define an extent of collaboration ranging from an "isolation" when the active groups neither communicate nor share resources, to a "collaboration" when an extensive (if not total) sharing of resources and co-production between the actors takes place (see McNamara, 2012).

The confrontation of active resident groups with authorities

Confrontations are the interaction patterns used by the active resident groups to express their dissatisfaction with the urban deterioration of their neighborhoods to the local authorities. Conflict is a disagreement arising between two actors due to their different goals or interests (Reinmer et al., 2015). Therefore, confrontations in activism are not *per se* a negative thing that should be avoided. They are embedded in local activism practices as a tactic for many active groups to reach their goals and manage their conflicting interests (see Sørensen & Johansen, 2016). The residents confront local authorities to change the status quo by adopting different means and levels of escalation, such as formal complaints, media campaigns, lawsuits, protests, and civil disobedience.

Many studies have established a correlation between conflict management strategies and the stages of conflict (see, Glasl, 1982; Soliku & Schraml, 2018). By shifting between the means of confrontation, one actor aims to force the other to stop ignoring the conflict and respond to it (Sørensen & Johansen, 2016). By involving external actors, using diverse and formal communication channels, and implementing direct actions, a confrontation becomes more intense, and the risk of losing control over the dispute increases. When the confrontation escalates, it involves third parties, such as politicians, public attention, and litigators, until it reaches civil disobedience (see Moore, 2014).

Conflict management strategies reflect how confrontational the active group can be in a context. These strategies go from risky to riskier as they depend on whether the recipient (authorities in our case) will respond to them positively or negatively (Kempf, 2002). Kruks-Wisner (2018) mentioned that claim-making activities by the citizens could carry the risks of social and political reprisal. Therefore, confronting local authorities is not a simple matter of free shifting between the different confrontational methods until the conflict is resolved. Building on this, we investigated for the case of Cairo the strategies of escalation used to define the extent of confrontation that the active groups can endure. This was achieved by looking at the "involvement of third actors," the "usage of diverse channels of communication," and the "type of confrontational action" in their activities.

This section developed a framework to determine what dimensions to observe in active resident groups' activities to understand the nature of local activism in the context of Cairo. For local activism as a rights-based practice, we deduced the ability of the active groups to articulate their needs in the form of rights as a dimension. For local activism as a practice in interaction with authorities, we deduced the dimensions of official recognition, collaboration with authorities, and confrontation with authorities. For each dimension, we defined the determinants that facilitate its analysis. Figure 4.1 summarizes the four dimensions proposed by this framework and their determinants.

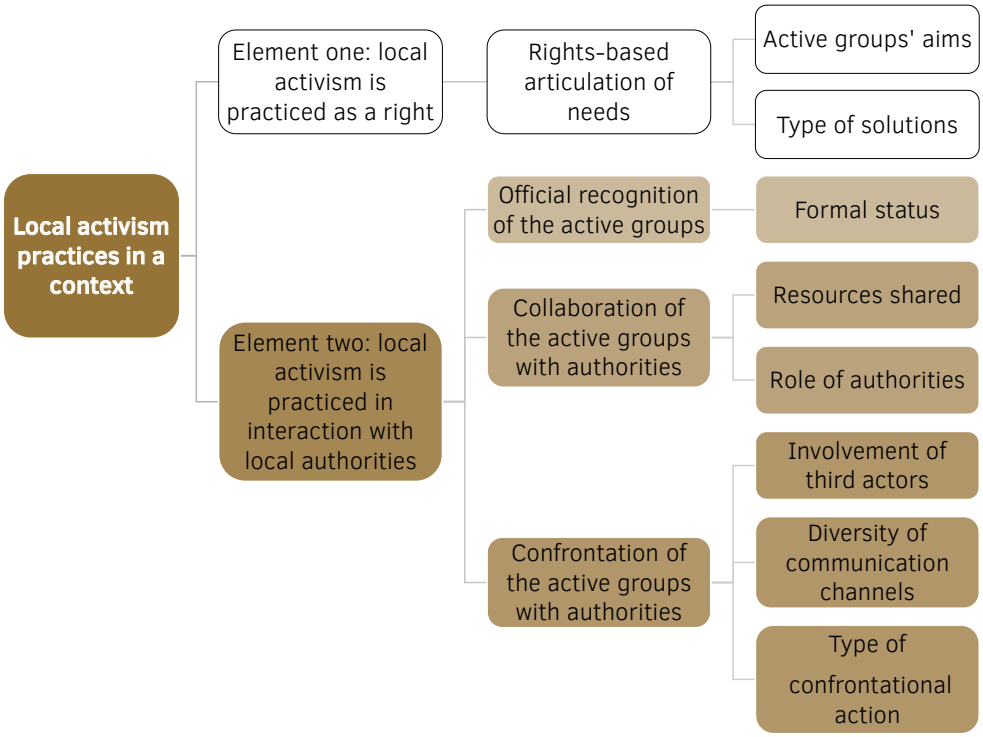

FIG. 4.1 The framework to analyze the active resident groups. Source: Authors

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4.4 Methods, Data Collection, and Limitations

We adopted a qualitative research approach, using observations and internet searches to explore the elements of "rights-based practices" and "interaction with local authorities" in local activism in Cairo. Between January and September 2019, we analyzed texts, images, and videos posted by active resident groups in Cairo on social media platforms where they announced their aims and activities. We adopted two stages for data collection: identifying and selecting active resident groups and collecting and analyzing data on the strategies adopted by these groups to improve their neighborhoods.

4.4.1 Identification and selection of the active resident groups

In this stage, we identified the active resident groups whose strategies of local activism we analyzed. We focused on active resident groups in the formal areas in Cairo governorate, while the informal areas are excluded for the following reason. The Egyptian government has special governmental entities and funds to deal with the informal areas. The focus in recent years has been on the project of "Egypt without Informal Areas," where the main approach is relocation instead of in situ development (Alfiky, 2018). Consequently, informal areas have different stakeholders from formal ones and are bound by social, legal, political, and economic restrictions. We believe the context of informal settlements produces different motives for local activism and a more complex state-citizen relationship. Therefore, it is inappropriate to neutralize the special context of informal settlements by including them in this study and draw conclusions from them on Cairo's ordinary neighborhoods. Out of 38 districts in Cairo governorate, we excluded 12 districts having informal settlements in most of their areas.

Focusing on the remaining districts, neither official documentation nor a public database for active resident groups existed. Therefore, we performed a citywide screening by conducting desktop research on Google using different Arabic keywords equivalent to resident unions, associations, coalitions, initiatives, and committees. The names of four groups appeared from Almaadi, Alazbakia, Misr Algadida, and Gharb districts. Capitalizing on these results, we googled the names of these four groups separately. The results were either Facebook accounts for these

active groups or news pieces based on the Facebook accounts of these groups. As such, the results directed us to Facebook as a key source of information. The significant presence of Facebook results was expected due to its significant role in the 2011 revolution (AlSayyad & Guvenc, 2015). The potential of social media increases even more in politically challenging contexts where citizens suffer from security and safety constraints to organize collective activities on the ground (Azer et al., 2019). In Egypt, Facebook is one of the few channels for citizens' engagement in public affairs. It is the most used social media platform with 38 million users, which is 37% of the population and almost 70% of Egypt's internet users in 2020 (Hootsuite, 2020).

We subsequently focused on Facebook, where more active groups appeared on its search engine that shares either the same district/neighborhood name or the same type of group (union, coalition, etc.) Out of 26 districts, 21 districts have at least one Facebook page by their residents, and few areas even have four or five pages. The majority of these groups combine different activities, such as sharing local news, reporting services and infrastructure problems, reviewing products, posting memories from the area, and advertising products for sale. However, some of these groups only act as marketplaces or friendship platforms which are not the focus of this study. We noticed that some groups have been inactive for years or rarely post content. Such inactivity could be related to the frustration of many active citizens after the political turbulence in 2013 and the imposed security restrictions afterward (Shawkat et al., 2015). We adopted a purposive sampling technique to eliminate inactive groups or marketplace and friendship-focused ones. We also looked for groups mentioning content regarding the urban problems of their neighborhoods. To do this, we scanned the description of these active groups' pages and the content of their shared posts. As a result, we identified 18 active resident groups from 13 districts. We included the 18 groups to provide as many insights as possible into the practice of local activism in Cairo. Figure 4.2 shows the 13 districts and the main urban problems highlighted by the active resident groups.

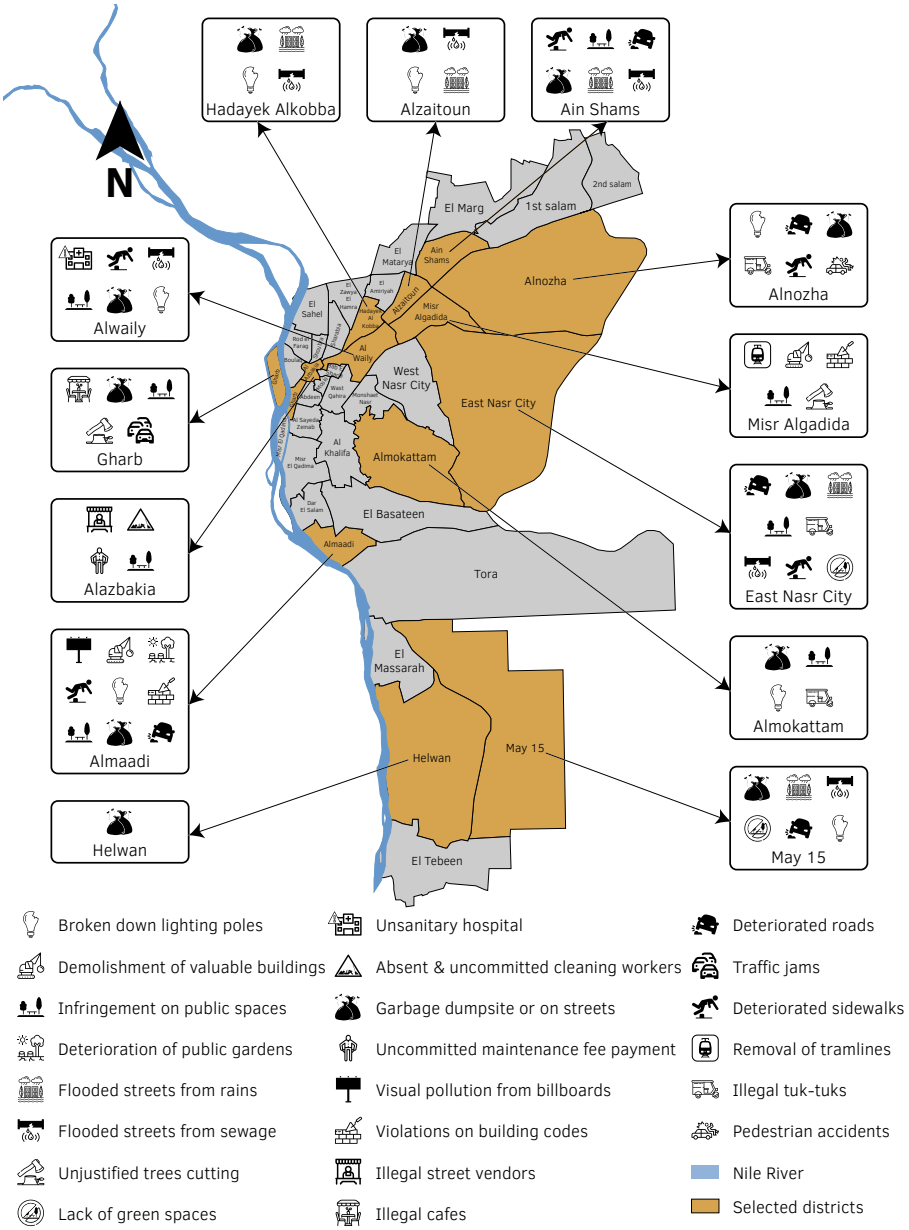

FIG. 4.2 Map of the selected districts and the main problems in each district. Source: Authors based on a map from cairo.gov.eg (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cairo300.jpg), colors and translation, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode, and Icons from (see Appendix D)

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The 18 active resident groups were either organized as associations, unions, and cooperatives or unorganized. The organized groups are non-profit groups with elected board members and predefined goals and plans. They mainly depend on collecting money from the residents through membership, monthly service costs, or bank revenues from start-up capital money. These groups' secondary resources are donations from the private sector or grants from national or international entities. Meanwhile, the unorganized groups have names such as coalitions and initiatives. When these groups gather many followers online, the founders are encouraged to lead the process of communicating residents' concerns and ideas to local authorities and taking action on the ground.

4.4.2 Data collection and analysis

We collected data from the photos, videos, posts, and comments published by each group on their Facebook platforms during the years 2018 and 2019. Social media is a resourceful medium for data collection in contexts without proper public databases, where citizens are limited in the available spaces on the ground to practice activism (Ashoub & Elkhateeb, 2021), and when participants are hard-to-reach (Lijadi & van Schalkwyk, 2015). We focused on observing and analyzing the active groups' strategies and aims in the data. We also referred to these groups' published descriptions to introduce themselves and their goals. We classified these data depending on the dimensions and determinants developed in the theoretical framework, as shown in Figure 4.3.

The names of the groups were anonymized to maintain their privacy and safety, especially since connecting citizens with the topic of active citizenship may put the members of these groups at risk of reprisal reactions (Miller, 2018). A code containing the name of the group's district and the group's type of organization[4] represent each group. Table 4.1 shows samples of the data and their analysis.

4 UG represents unorganized group.
Coop. represents neighborhood cooperative.
Assoc. represents non- profit associations.
Union represents coordinating occupants' union.

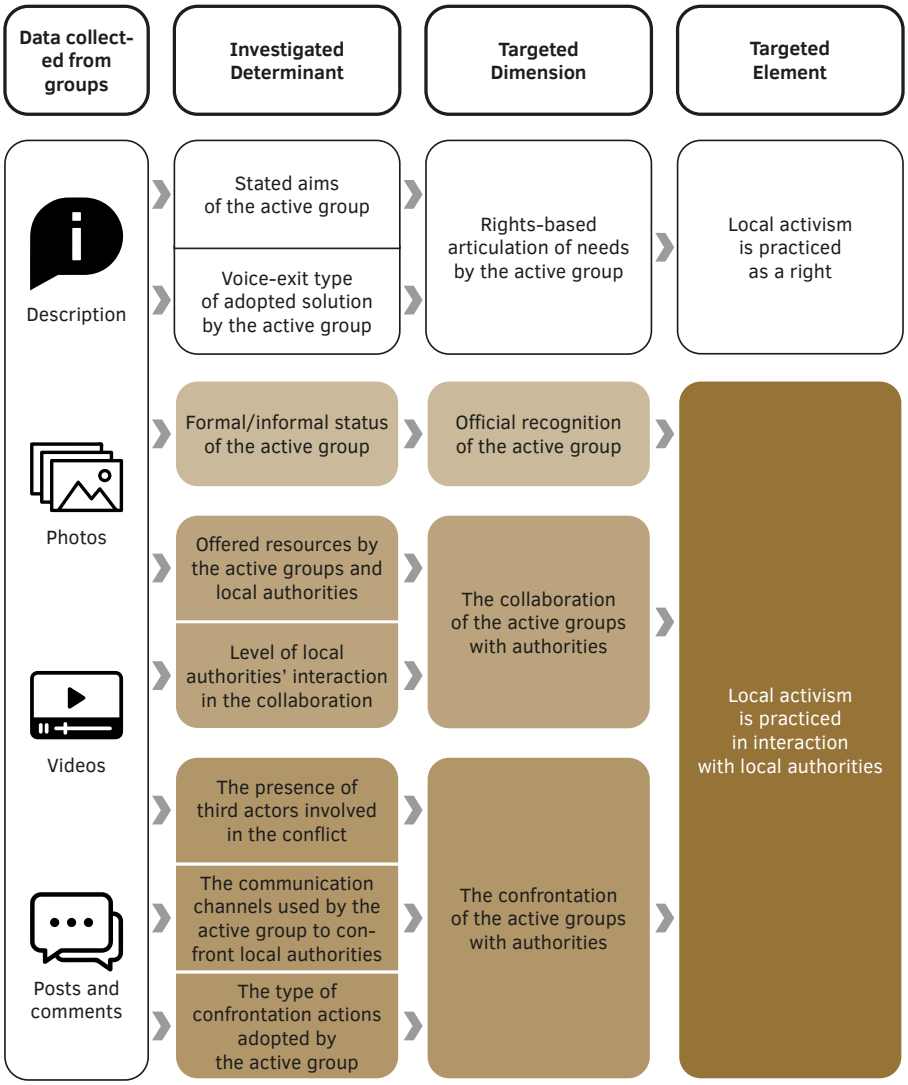

FIG. 4.3 Data collection and analysis flow based on the theoretical framework. Source: Authors

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TABLE 4.1 Sample content from active groups' posted activities and aims in relation to the investigated determinants.

Investigated Determinants	Classifications	Sample content from active groups' posted activities and aims
Aims of the active group	Rights-centered	Aim: the page helps the people to demand their legitimate right to a better life and development of their district
	Quality of services-centered	Aim: to upgrade the deteriorated roads and main squares
	Mixed	Aim: discuss the district's problems, solve them, and communicate our voice to the officials.
Formal/ informal status	Formal	"According to the decisions of Union <X>, private cars and taxis only are allowed to enter from Gate <Y>, and whoever violates this shall face legal consequences."
	Informal	"Everything, including security, cleanliness, speed bumps, paints, and other things, was done with the self-efforts of the residents without a union."
Authorities' interaction	Listening	"The union board is thankful to the district office for responding and sending specialists to maintain the light control panels for buildings 1-9."
	Facilitating with procedural support	"We shed light on the positive things constantly. Today we mention the support of authorities in licensing the establishment of security gates in the neighborhood."
	Participating with physical and human support	"In cooperation with the local authorities, we will deliver sturdy bags to the doorman of buildings and villas to collect tree trimmings and mowed grass. District workers will pass by every two days to empty the bags."
Confrontation	Criticism using social media	- "Mr. head of the district [-] this is the failing garbage collection system; we do not want it. We do not want you." - "The neighborhood, unfortunately, with this head of the district, is witnessing the worst period in its history."
	Mediating through personal connections	"We do not forget the support of our representative in the Parliament in obtaining security approvals for the security gates."
	Campaigning through social media	"The last day to sign the petition tonight to stop the demolishment of villas in the neighborhood."
	Criticism through press	"The complaint we sent to the newspaper has been published."
	Administrative decisions through authorities' complaints units	"A screenshot of the complaint to the Council of Ministers regarding the accumulated garbage in the neighborhood."

4.4.3 Study Limitations

It is important to note that this study's results are not representative of all possible active groups in Cairo for two main limitations. First, relying on social media to identify active groups cannot guarantee capturing the full range of active resident groups in Cairo. There may be active groups that are either undetectable due to privacy settings or based on mobile chat apps, or without a virtual presence. However, due to the widespread use of Facebook, it is considered to be the most important online channel to gather people in Egypt, and we found all active groups known to us in Cairo on Facebook. M. Keleg et al. (2021) also noticed that districts in Cairo have at least one Facebook group and a page for residents to discuss the district news or exchange ideas, announcements, and information. Therefore, we believe that the active groups on Facebook could uncover most practices of local activism in Cairo. Second, the data collected is limited to the active groups observed at the time of data collection. Accordingly, the results capture diverse practices of local activism in Cairo's neighborhoods; however, they do not claim the continuous presence of the same practices or active groups.

4.5 Results and Discussion

In this research, we examined the solutions adopted by selected active resident groups regarding two main elements: 1) the practice of local activism as a right and 2) the practice of local activism in interaction with local authorities. Next, we explain where the active groups in Cairo stand regarding these two elements.

4.5.1 The practice of local activism as a right in Cairo

For the element of local activism as a right, we investigated the ability of the active groups to articulate their local interventions as a right in their stated aims and the adopted solutions. In the aims of the active groups, we found three main categories. First, active groups whose aims are rights-centered. These groups emphasize the right-based term "rights" in their description of the groups. Second, active groups whose aims were service quality-centered, revolving around improving the public spaces and the quality of the local public services. Third, active groups whose aims combine rights-centered aims and service quality ones.

We also found three categories of solutions adopted by the active groups in Cairo. First, active groups adopting voice solutions in the form of highlighting the urban deterioration in their neighborhood and demanding intervention from authorities. Second, active groups adopting internal-exit solutions by improving the urban deteriorations themselves instead of depending on the level of urban improvement offered by the local authorities. Finally, active groups combining voice and internal-exit solutions. We will discuss next the relevance of these observations on the practice of local activism of these groups as a right.

TABLE 4.2 Local activism practiced as a right in Cairo.

Code	Rights-based articulation of needs	
	Aims articulation	Type of solutions
East Nasr City (UG1)	Mixed	Combined
Alwaily (UG 2)		
Hadayek Alkobba (UG)		Voice
Almokattam (UG)		
May 15 (UG)		
Alnozha (UG)		
Ain Shams (UG)		
Alwaily (UG1)		
Misr Algadida (UG)	Rights-centered	
Alzaitoun (UG)		
East Nasr City (UG2)	Quality of services centered	
Helwan (UG)		
Gharb (assoc.)		Combined
Misr Algadida (assoc.)		
East Nasr City (coop.)		
Alazbakia union		Internal exit
Almaadi union		
East Nasr City union		

In Table 4.2, we noticed that the active groups that articulate their needs as rights tend to adopt voice solutions to reach their goals. For instance, Misr Algadida (UG) aims to protect "the right to a quality life in Misr Algadida." To achieve this, residents raise awareness against the problems occurring in the district on the group's platform. We also noticed that most groups that use the "right" tone for urban improvement are unorganized. The unorganized groups seem to capitalize on social media's ability to mobilize, motivate, and expand the outreach of residents' problems or claims. These abilities are consistent with voice solutions in which the active

groups target the authorities and demand improvement from them. They also target the residents by reminding them of their rights to a certain quality of life and their responsibility toward demanding this right.

The aims of organized groups in the form of associations, cooperatives, and unions focus on improving the quality of service and the built environment. They do not use right-based expressions in their aims. Without interviewing members of these groups, this observation is not definitive evidence that these groups do not consider their active role in improving neighborhoods as a right. Instead, this observation emphasizes that these groups' aims focus on satisfying the need for urban improvement more than stressing residents' right to better urban quality. Moving to their adopted strategies, the union-based active groups adopt internal-exit solutions such as setting up gates at the entrances of their areas and funding the pavement, plantation, and tiling of multiple streets in their neighborhoods. These solutions focus on satisfying the need for urban improvement more than stressing the authorities' responsibility toward maintaining the residents' right to better urban quality. Meanwhile, active groups in the form of associations and cooperatives combine voice and internal-exit solutions. For instance, East Nasr City (coop.) employed workers to clean the streets and maintain the sewage system of the buildings (internal exit); simultaneously, it demanded the state's intervention in preventing the buildings and shops' infringements over public spaces (voice).

In our case, active resident groups often use rights-related expressions in the context of the right to a certain urban quality, including maintained roads, walkable sidewalks, safe streets, organized market spaces, and a clean environment. This expression of rights indicates that the voice actions by the active resident groups are reactions to the right to a certain urban quality that is not adhered to by the government. Meanwhile, the use of the rights argumentation as the right of residents in decision-making was only noticed in the voice actions of Misr Algadida (assoc.) that call for residents' participation in the urban improvement plans of their neighborhood. Our analysis reveals that many active groups include right-based argumentations in their aims and adopt voice actions to demand their rights. These results suggest that many active groups practice local activism as a right, but it is a right to a certain urban quality within the neighborhoods. This right rarely extends to the right of residents to be involved in the processes that produce the neighborhoods' urban conditions in the first place.

4.5.2 The practice of local activism in interaction with local authorities in Cairo

We deduced the dimensions of official recognition, collaboration with authorities, and confrontation with authorities for the element of practicing local activism in interaction with authorities. For the official recognition dimension, we searched for the legal status of the active groups in terms of formality. For the collaboration dimension, we explored the resources offered by both the active groups and district offices in their joint activities to improve the neighborhoods. Additionally, we observed the level of authorities' interaction with the groups to determine their role in collaborative activities. Finally, for the confrontation dimension, we investigated the involvement of a third actor in the conflict between the active groups and local authorities. We also investigated the diversity of the communication channels used and the type of confrontation actions.

The official recognition of the active resident groups in Cairo

Some groups had a high level of official recognition due to their legal status as associations, cooperatives, or unions. The posts of these formal groups show that formalization widened their influence since the laws recognized them. Also, becoming formal enables them to practice different governance mechanisms. For instance, the district office contracted Masr Algadida (assoc.) to implement urban improvement projects in their area after becoming formal. In addition, the district office occasionally contacted Gharb (assoc.) to publish local news. These interactions indicate that local authorities recognize these formal groups and are inclined to involve them in the governance process.

Meanwhile, most unorganized groups depend on informal tactics to be officially recognized. They capitalize on the number of online followers or the members' personal connections. With these connections, some unorganized groups approach the local authorities and present themselves. However, it is up to the local authorities whether to consider hearing and responding to that group of residents. These informal tactics may allow the group to participate with local authorities in joint work on the ground, as in the case of Alwaily (UG2) and Alnozha (UG). However, as noticed in the rest of the unorganized groups, their participation in governance is merely to communicate the neighborhood problems.

Regarding the reasons behind the significant presence of informal active groups, N. S. Fahmy (2012) described the state system in Egypt as "Bureaucratic Authoritarian." This system puts legal and procedural challenges on civil society

to establish a formal group. Additionally, the active resident groups face internal challenges related to the lack of resources needed for an organization, such as funds, time, and capacity. Such challenges may drive many active resident groups in Cairo to choose informal ways to become officially recognized. This choice is especially the case for the groups focusing on being a voice platform rather than a self-help group that wants to secure financial and physical resources for their activities.

The collaboration of active resident groups with authorities in Cairo

As shown in Table 4.3, many unorganized groups seem to work in isolation from local authorities. They offer a platform for the residents to post about the urban deterioration in their neighborhoods and question the authorities' performance. However, these groups do not seem interested in establishing joint work with the authorities. El-Azzazy & Zaazaa (2017) referred to this work approach as the "shadow approach," in which active citizens work without cooperating or interacting with the authorities since they fear being disrupted. This fear increased after the laws forbidding fieldwork without permits (El-Azzazy & Zaazaa, 2017) and criminalizing unsanctioned protests (Shawkat et al., 2015).

We also noticed that the groups in our study that provide various resources to improve their neighborhood receive more supporting resources from the local authorities. This correlation may become challenging for many informal groups that cannot legally collect financial and material resources. Therefore, they can only offer information about the problems in the neighborhood and ideas to solve them. The information-sharing from the unorganized groups is met by listening and possible responses from local authorities. Meanwhile, the formal active groups show an ability to raise funds and acquire material resources for their urban improvement activities. This ability is met by more support and resources from the district office. For example, Gharb (assoc.) offered their human resources and cleaning tools to implement cleanup initiatives in the district. In return, the district office offered cleaning workers and heavy equipment. A limited sharing of resources by the local authorities in Cairo is expected due to the centralized governance system in Egypt. Almost 90 percent of the governorates' budget is centralized and directed by appointed officials (Tadamun, 2013a), which leads to a top-down decision-making process in allocating this budget. As such, the resources left to local authorities that could be shared with active resident groups remain questionable.

TABLE 4.3 The practice of local activism in interaction with local authorities in Cairo.

Code	Official recognition (formal/ informal)	Collaboration with authorities to improve the urban quality of the neighborhood			Confrontation with local authorities to improve the urban quality of the neighborhood		
		Offered resources		Level of authorities' interaction	Involvement of the third actor	Diversity of communication channels	Type of confrontation actions
		Active Group	District Office				
Alzaitoun (UG)	Informal	No collaboration activities were found			Yes	• Social media • Personal connections	• Criticism • Mediating
Hadayek Alkobba (UG)						• Social media • Press	• Criticism
Almokattam (UG)					No	• Social media	
Helwan (UG)							
Ain Shams (UG)							
Misr Algadida (UG)							
Alwaily (UG1)		• Information • Human	Complaints receiving	Listening	Yes	• Social media • Press • Personal connections • Authorities	• Criticism • Mediating • Administrative decision
East Nasr City (UG2)		• Information & ideas				• Social media • Press & media	• Criticism • Campaigning
Alnozha (UG)							
May 15 (UG)					No	• Social media	
Alwaily (UG2)		• Information • Human	• Complaints receiving • Procedural support • Physical support	• Listening • Facilitating • Participating			
East Nasr City (UG1)		• Information & ideas • Physical • Human	• Complaints receiving • Procedural support • Physical support • Human support		Yes	• Social media • Personal connections	• Criticism • Mediating

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TABLE 4.3 The practice of local activism in interaction with local authorities in Cairo.

Code	Official recognition (formal/ informal)	Collaboration with authorities to improve the urban quality of the neighborhood			Confrontation with local authorities to improve the urban quality of the neighborhood		
		Offered resources		Level of authorities' interaction	Involvement of the third actor	Diversity of communication channels	Type of confrontation actions
		Active Group	District Office				
Gharb (assoc.)	Formal	• Information & ideas • Physical • Human	• Complaints receiving • Procedural support • Physical support • Human support	• Listening • Facilitating • Participating	Yes	• Social media • Press • Personal connections • Authorities • Court system	• Campaigning • Lobbying • Administrative decision • Litigation
Almaadi union						• Social media • Press • Authorities	• Campaigning • Administrative decision
East Nasr City (coop.)			• Complaints receiving			• Press • Personal connections • Authorities	• Campaigning • Mediating • Administrative decision
Alazbakia union			• Technical support • Complaints receiving • Procedural support		No confrontational activities were found		
Misr Algadida (assoc.)			• Complaints receiving • Procedural support • Physical support		Yes	• Social media • Press & media • Personal connections • Authorities	• Criticism • Campaigning • Lobbying • Administrative decision
East Nasr City union			• Complaints receiving • Procedural support		No	• Social media	• Criticism

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Regarding the level of interaction by local authorities, they seem to be "passive responders." In posts shared by the active groups on joint activities with district offices, we found these activities initiated by the groups. Meanwhile, the local authorities seemed to only react to residents' initiatives but did not initiate joint activities themselves. This passive responding role of the local authorities corresponds with the unfamiliar culture toward citizen engagement in local governance. The local authorities in Cairo are far from involving the residents in their activities or seeing them as partners in the urban governance of districts. Additionally, they do not appear to practice any "level of participation" (Teernstra & Pinkster, 2016). This passive responding attitude suggests that local authorities are neither expecting an active role from the residents nor mobilizing the residents for such a role.

The confrontation of the active resident groups with authorities in Cairo

Many unorganized groups in our study adopt online criticism, which is a low level of confrontation, focusing on pinpointing the local authorities' deficiencies and demanding their neighborhoods' improvement. They post pictures and videos of many problems in the neighborhoods, accompanied by captions like "where is the district office amidst all this negligence." These captions imply the presence of a conflict with local authorities, and the residents publicly express that conflict. However, it is an uncommunicated conflict because no posts mentioned a direct communication of these conflicts with the local authorities. We could not find content from these groups regarding involving third parties with administrative, legal, or legislative power. We found no mention of escalating activities such as submitting official complaints or resorting to the court system or the Parliament in their adopted strategies.

The form of escalation adopted by some unorganized groups depended on initiating media and press campaigns to gain public support. Additionally, few groups involve a third party as a mediator between them and the district office. This mediation strategy depends on the group's connections with natural leaders, political party members, or local members in Parliament who could communicate with the district office. While these third actors may influence the local authorities, they do not have the power to enforce decisions. For instance, East Nasr City (UG2) could not force the local authorities to stop the infringements of cafés on public spaces despite running a wide media campaign and reaching out to Parliament members. The reliance of residents on personal connections to deal with local authorities was also highlighted by Berenschot & Van Klinken (2018) in Indonesia. These personal

connections help active groups to achieve results amicably and informally without putting the groups in face-to-face interactions with the local authorities. However, the influence of these personal connections is non-binding.

It might seem unexpected that unorganized groups adopt this less confrontational manner since they majorly depend on voice actions and state-targeting strategies. This less confrontational manner is not a sign of responsiveness from local authorities, as many groups express that their strategies did not solve the conflict. Instead, the opting out of many active groups from higher confrontational strategies could result from the political history in Egypt. Although weak in legitimacy and effective administration, the single-party regimes in Egypt used repression to maintain themselves. This repression created what N. S. Fahmy (2012) described as "passive resistance," in which the citizens do not confront the government but rather evade and ignore unpleasant policies. Our results suggest that active resident groups are cautious when choosing their confrontation strategies since they do not have equal power in front of the local government. So, even if the residents might be aware of the different levels of confrontation, they are also aware of the possible legal consequences of being accused of "publishing fake news" or "instigating revolt" (see, Demerdash, 2021; Sweet, 2019).

On the contrary, many organized active groups in our study resort to legal and administrative measures to escalate and pressure the local authorities. For instance, Gharb (assoc.) helped the residents in suing the National Authority for Tunnels in Egypt against the new metro project passing under old buildings. Almaadi union managed to stop local authorities from allowing the demolition of villas to construct apartment buildings after complaining to the governor and council of ministers. By adopting these escalations, these groups confront the lack of responsiveness from the local authorities face-to-face. As previously mentioned, these organized groups cooperate with district offices to maximize the efficiency of their urban improvement activities. So, some groups still choose highly confrontational strategies even though they might face a future lack of cooperation from local authorities due to displacing local officials' power with decisions from upper administrative levels (Néfissa, 2009).

4.6 A view on the local activism practices of active groups in Cairo

At this point, we looked at how different active groups in Cairo practiced local activism as a right and their interactions with local authorities. As a final step, we merged the two dimensions across these groups to show the general distribution of the main characteristics of local activism and identify clusters of active groups that share the same characteristics. As shown in Table 4.4, we developed three main clusters of active groups that connect the 18 active groups in this study with existing types of active groups in the literature. By doing this, we attempt to provide a holistic view on the local activism practices of these groups.

First, we found a cluster of unorganized active groups that express the need for a certain level of urban quality by posting online critiques and comments. They adopt a shadow approach in their work, avoiding direct interaction with local authorities. Although they are voice groups, they avoid confrontation with authorities and isolate themselves from collaborating with them. They depend on the public interaction they have on their pages and the connections of their members for possible official recognition. They resemble the "user" type of citizen participation described by Cornwall & Gaventa (2000), which reviews service quality.

Second is the cluster of advocacy groups that have a significant belief in their right to a certain urban quality and in the responsibility of the local government for providing and maintaining this quality (see, Cornwall & Gaventa, 2000). They communicate with local authorities to report the problem and follow up on the officials' response. Meantime, other groups confront the local authorities through campaigns and mediators from their connections. They are unorganized groups that collect complaints on social media and work on communicating these complaints to decision-makers. In a way, these unorganized groups take the "user" type one step further by advocating their right to a certain urban quality and demanding it from the state.

Finally is the cluster of organized groups that exit the deteriorated public services and infrastructure as much as possible and rely on providing services and improving infrastructure on their own. Authorities officially recognize them through their legal formalization. In some cases, they form coalitions with local authorities and, in other cases, clash with them through litigation and administrative decisions. The formality of these groups helps them raise funds, acquire permits, and share resources with local authorities. They resemble the "self-provisioning" type of citizen participation described by Cornwall & Gaventa (2000).

TABLE 4.4 A holistic view on the 18 active resident groups.

Code	Type of solutions	Level of official recognition (formal/ informal)	The higher level of collaboration adopted	The higher level of confrontation adopted	Type of active group
Hadayek Alkobba (UG)	Voice	Informal	Isolation	Criticism	User
Helwan (UG)					
Almokattam (UG)					
Ain Shams (UG)					
Misr Algadida (UG)					
Alzaitoun (UG)					
May 15 (UG)			Communication		
East Nasr City (UG2)	Voice	Informal	Communication	Campaigning	Advocacy
Alnozha (UG)					
Alwaily (UG1)			Cooperation	Administrative decision	
Alwaily (UG2)	Combined			Criticism	
East Nasr City (UG1)				Mediation	
East Nasr City (coop.)	Combined	Formal	Communication	Administrative decision	Self-provisioning
Misr Algadida (assoc.)			Cooperation		
Gharb (assoc.)				Litigation	
Alazbakia union	Internal exit			Avoidance	
Almaadi union				Administrative decision	
East Nasr City union			Coordination	Criticism	
Total	• Voice = 10 • Combined = 5 • Internal exit = 3	• Informal = 12 • Formal = 6	• Isolation = 6 • Communication = 4 • Coordination = 1 • Cooperation = 7	• Avoidance = 1 • Criticism = 9 • Campaigning = 2 • Mediation = 1 • Administrative decision = 4 • Litigation = 1	• User = 7 • Advocacy = 5 • Self- provisioning = 6

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4.7 Conclusion

This paper focuses on exploring how local activism by resident groups manifests itself in the problematic context of Cairo. For this research, we reviewed the characteristics that shape local activism in the neighborhood governance literature. Rights-based practices and state-citizen interaction were key elements in the literature on local activism practices. These two elements were the base of a theoretical framework that enables us to better understand the practices of the 18 active resident groups in Cairo city that we identified on Facebook.

Our findings suggest that active groups in Cairo are practicing local activism in the form of a right. However, this right mostly results from the need for a certain urban quality of services. It rarely extends to the residents' right to decide on the urban improvement and policies in the neighborhoods. The active residents' interaction with the local authorities is selective, ambivalent, and unstable due to the problematic state-citizen relationship in the Egyptian context. On the one hand, unorganized active groups tend to work under the radar by being informal and disconnected from local authorities and avoiding clashes with them. On the other hand, other groups want to benefit from and cooperate with the district offices' resources and therefore choose to become formal and recognized by the local authorities.

Furthermore, we observed three main clusters of active groups. First, unorganized user groups that depend on social media to react to the quality of services without actual interaction with local authorities. Second, some unorganized groups take the user behavior one step further by advocating their rights in a certain urban quality and demanding it from the state, adopting low levels of collaboration and confrontation. Finally, we found self-provisioning groups that are formally recognized by authorities. These organized groups interact more with local authorities than unorganized ones in the collaboration and confrontation interactions.

The topic of local activism in Global South contexts has been tackled in recent studies, focusing on "insurgent citizenship" (Watson, 2016) that takes place in the form of resistant practices by marginalized citizens in poor and informal settings. In these forms of activism, the residents confront the authorities face-to-face to claim their right to the city. Our study contributes to the literature by showing that local activism in Cairo is practiced in less confrontational and collaborative manners. These forms of local activism are distinct from the state-supported local activism, and the resistive practices of activism found in other contexts. These findings,

therefore, improve our understanding of residents' challenges and experiences when practicing activism in a problematic state-citizen relationship. This problematic relationship is found in many contexts in Africa and beyond. Being informed about these challenges and experiences in such contexts is the starting point for policymakers to understand and support local activism.

Obviously, this research has limitations. Due to its exploratory nature, our findings should be considered indicative of how local activism is practiced in a politically challenging and largely unexplored context, but they are not fully representative of all active groups in Cairo. Also, to understand the characteristics of local activism in Cairo, and particularly their visibility in the public domain, we are limited by what the active groups publish on their platform. As we could not conduct interviews with the founders of these active groups, it is possible that what active groups announce generally differs from what they would say in one-to-one interviews. Future research should consider interviewing members of active resident groups to strengthen or adjust these findings.

Moving forward, any improvement to the active role of residents in local governance in a problematic state-citizen relationship necessitates legal and procedural changes. These legal and procedural changes should be geared toward fostering "willing, able and equipped" Andrews, Cowell, Downe, et al. (2008, p. 492) citizens to practice local activism. They should encourage active resident groups, establish their effective involvement in the yearly development plans, and facilitate the procedures for residents' gatherings in public spaces. Furthermore, these changes should promote residents' unions, cooperatives, and associations and facilitate their establishment. Most importantly, these changes need to provide a necessary shift in how local authorities value local activism in these contexts. We observe that local authorities in Cairo seem to lack the motivation and incentives to proactively reach out to active groups. If the value of local activism is (re)defined in such contexts, the role of the local authorities may shift to that of initiators, mobilizers, and educators. Further research should therefore investigate the perspectives of active residents and local authorities regarding the legal and procedural changes that underpin a more positive and pro-active local government perspective on the value of local activism.

5 Unraveling the roles of active residents in a politically challenging context

An Exploration in Cairo

Elwageeh, A., Van Ham, M., & Kleinhans, R. (2023). Unraveling the role of active residents in a politically challenging context: The Case of Cairo city. *Conditionally accepted.*

ABSTRACT Capital cities struggle with population growth that challenges existing infrastructure and affects the quality of urban life. The failure of local governments to manage urban deterioration motivates active resident groups to improve their neighborhoods. These groups struggle to play a role in neighborhood governance in contexts where citizens' engagement in public affairs is restricted. This paper aims to understand the roles active residents can play in the neighborhood governance process and how these roles unfold in a context challenging for citizen engagement in public life. We adopted a case study methodology and interviewed active residents and local officials from selected districts in Cairo. Respondents' perspectives revealed that the space for active residents to influence neighborhood governance is limited mostly to implementation and management. In this limited space, active residents' role is confined to either that of "fixer," which restores existing services, or that of a struggling and intermittent "self-provider." They have no influential role in policy formulation. Further research may focus on tracing the identified roles and investigating why they exist in this manner in order to identify the challenges and constraints in current local governance arrangements.

KEYWORDS Neighborhood governance, active residents, citizen engagement, Cairo

5.1 Introduction

The role of active residents in neighborhood governance is arousing increasing interest. Active residents are those residents who initiate and join collective activities to improve their neighborhoods' conditions. These collective activities may collaborate with existing institutions, confront them, or even be isolated (Lopez, 2019). Such activities represent a form of activism as the active residents claim their right to be part of the urban improvement of their city. In this paper, local activism concerns all initiatives from active residents who attempt to play a role in the urban improvement of their neighborhoods.

Few studies focused on local activism in countries whose political context discourages active citizen engagement in governance and may even prevent it. These studies discussed a limited practice of local activism in which the basic conditions of protected civil rights, freedom of speech, and independent authorities cannot be found (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Gaventa, 2006; Lopez, 2019). It is suggested that active residents practice local activism in an unconfrontational, selective, and service-centered manner to improve the urban conditions of their neighborhoods (Elwageeh et al., 2020). However, it is not yet clear how this suggested limited local activism affects the neighborhood governance processes in these challenging contexts.

By focusing on the city of Cairo, this paper aims to better understand the roles active residents can play in the neighborhood governance process and how these roles unfold in a culture challenging for citizen involvement in public life. "Context" is central to shaping the role of active residents in their neighborhoods (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007). In fact, Cairo is an exemplary case of a context that discourages active citizens from engaging in urban governance. It is a metropolitan city in Egypt's economically struggling and authoritarian rule country. The state-citizen dynamics in Egypt are described as hostile to citizen engagement, and the state discourages public participation in urban planning and governance (Steve Connelly, 2010). We investigate the perspective of local officials and active residents from districts in Cairo to provide a better understanding of the possible roles of active residents in this challenging context.

This paper is organized as follows; Section 5.2 overviews Cairo's local governance and residents' limited involvement in urban affairs. Section 5.3 focuses on developing a theoretical framework for the roles of active citizens and the representation of these roles in the neighborhood governance process. Section 5.4 explains the methods of

data collection and processing used to apply the theoretical framework to interviews with local actors in Cairo. Section 5.5 highlights the roles of active resident groups in Cairo and the dimensions of the neighborhood governance process in which these roles have an influence. Finally, Section 5.6 reflects on the uncovered roles.

5.2 Urban deterioration and limited involvement of residents in local governance in Cairo

Cairo is Egypt's capital and the center of the state government, investments, and mobility (Sims, 2012). As shown in Figure 5.1, Cairo governorate has a main agglomeration and three New Urban Communities (NUCs). According the Decision of the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt No. 314 of 2022 (2022), the New Administrative Capital (NAC) became a part of the governorate. The local government structure in the main agglomeration is composed of a governorate office and 38 district offices subordinate to it. Each NUC is managed by a municipal agency that follows the New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA). As for the NAC, it is unclear what local government arrangement it would have.

With a population of over 10 million (CAPMAS, 2022), the rapid urban growth pressures Cairo's amenities and built environment (GOPP, 2012), especially in the main agglomeration we focus on in this study. These urban challenges are addressed in a centralized manner that suffers from defective identification of urban development priorities (Elmouelhi, 2021) and imbalanced budget allocation for improving the existing neighborhoods (Shawkat & Khalil, 2016a, 2016b). Furthermore, the district's local government system suffers from bureaucracy and limited power and resources (Sims, 2012; Tadamun, 2013b). As a result, Cairo's residents in the main agglomeration struggle with urban deterioration. Although with varying magnitude, the different socio-economic neighborhoods suffer from similar urban deterioration related to garbage collection, sewerage management, roads pavement, streets lighting, public parks management, and public spaces infringements (Elwageeh, Kleinhans, et al., 2023).

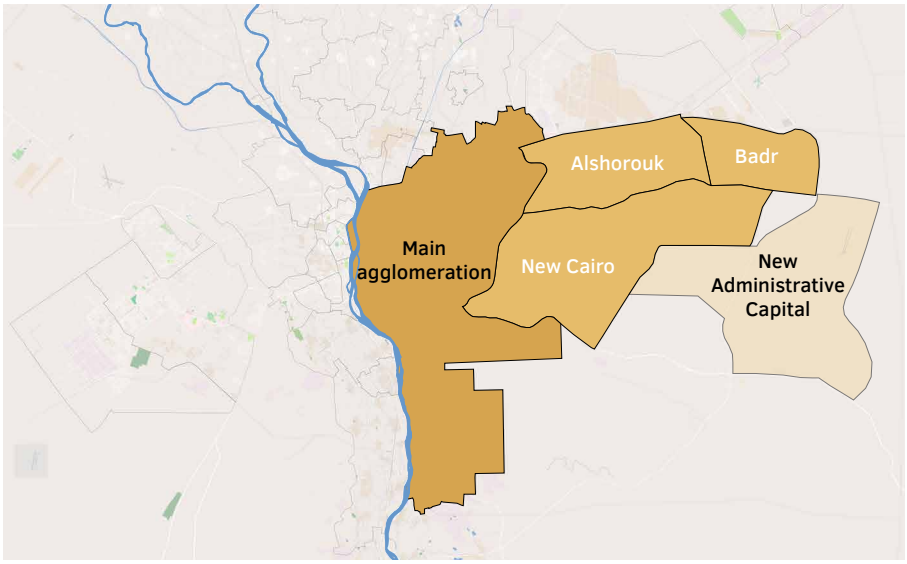

FIG. 5.1 The urban structure of Cairo governorate. Source: Authors using base map from Thomas Brinkhoff, "Greater Cairo (Egypt): Districts – Population Statistics, Charts and Map," City Population, July 1, 2021, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/egypt/greatercairo/

Regarding the limited power and resources of local government, the President selects Cairo's governor, who allocates the budget and sets priorities for urban development and services provision (Elmashat et al., 2012). This mandate is applied to specific sectors such as local roads, solid waste management, street lighting, public gardens, civil defense, and local development support programs in health, education, and culture (Abdel-Latif, 2013). For such sectors in Egypt, the dedicated budget is significantly low (Tadamun, 2013a), and the governor decides on any projects only after receiving the fiscal budget of the governorate. As for the governorate's budget, around 82% of it is central, while the rest is local taxes and fees (Shawkat & Hendawy, 2017). The heads of districts are also selected by the central government and are mandated to execute and manage infrastructure and public services within their geographical boundaries (Elmashat et al., 2012). They implement state-led urban policies and plans and manage services such as garbage collection, building control activities, and local streets maintenance (Sims, 2012; Tadamun, 2013a). Even such managerial tasks are challenging with the spread of urban deterioration, building violations, and infringements on public spaces in Cairo.

The local governance arrangements in Cairo do not provide channels for residents to be involved in the governance of their neighborhoods. There used to be elected Local Popular Councils (LPCs) to represent the residents at the governorate and district

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levels (Tadamun, 2016b). However, in practice, they were inactive and acted as advisors only. After the 2011 revolution, LPCs were abolished based on their loyalty to the old regime. Since then, a new law has been under development that disrupts the holding of LPCs elections, leaving the citizens without elected representatives in the local government. Consequently, government-appointed district officials develop the districts' yearly development plans alone (Braneya & Fouda, 2019).

Additionally, the state's urban plans and development projects in Cairo are not communicated to the residents. A recent example of such projects includes widening inner roads and constructing overpass bridges to connect the main agglomeration with the NAC without informing the residents, let alone involving them in the decision-making or planning (Alhabbal, 2021). These constructions reduce the urban quality of the neighborhoods by removing trees, parks, and even residential buildings in many districts (Aly & Dimitrijevic, 2022; Elkhateeb, 2020). Even more, residents' ability to protest these projects or the failing urban management of districts is constrained by the regime's repressive practices (Harb, 2019). These practices include a protest law (Selem, 2013) restricting the right to protest rather than regulating it. This law establishes unrealistic procedures for organizing protests and adopts excessive and unclear sanctions to punish violators (Abdelaal, 2014). Another repressive practice is the Press and Information Regulation Law which gives the authorities power to censor news media and block content on the internet (Lutscher & Ketchley, 2022). This law limits the freedom of speech, as citizens are prone to be accused of publishing fake news when criticizing the government's performance or decisions on social media (see, Demerdash, 2021).

Previous research has shown that active resident groups in Cairo focus on improving, maintaining, and beautifying neighborhood public areas. Earlier studies have focused on exploring the tactics of some active resident groups, highlighting their social innovation, capturing some of their characteristics, and introducing their activities as parallel urban practices in planning and governance (El-Azzazy & Zaazaa, 2017; Elrahman, 2016; Elwageeh, Kleinhans, et al., 2023; Ibrahim & Singerman, 2014; Shawkat et al., 2015). Only a few studies have investigated the views of active resident groups to understand their practices and attitudes toward neighborhood management (see, El-Meehy, 2012; Galal Ahmed, 2019). They focused on challenges to local activism in particular neighborhoods or by one specific active resident group. Moreover, we could not find studies combining the views of officials and active residents. No studies analyzed various active resident groups to identify their roles in the neighborhood governance process in Cairo. Therefore, the current knowledge about local activism in Cairo's challenging context lacks a broader perspective showing how far local activism is limited and how it contributes to the local governance process in Cairo's districts.

5.3 A theoretical framework for the roles of active resident groups

In the past three decades, the concept of governance has evolved into a complex multidimensional process that involves multiple actors steering and realizing public policies and services at different spatial scales (Arnouts et al., 2012; Somerville, 2011). The term governance incorporates different types of governing, with varying degrees of involvement of citizens in managing public affairs (T. Mattijssen et al., 2018). In any governance mode, active citizens may switch between strategies to achieve their goals. With multiple strategies, citizens attempt to engage in different governance activities, and thus their roles in local governance vary. In this section, we develop a framework for a deeper exploration of the roles of active citizens in governing activities. To achieve this, we investigate the roles of active resident groups described in the literature and how these roles are represented in various governing activities.

5.3.1 The roles of active resident groups described in the literature

Many scholars have examined the different roles of residents in shaping their urban environment. The famous "ladder of participation" (Arnstein, 1969) examined the levels of citizens' engagement in governance and, thus, their possible influence on governing activities. It classified citizens' engagement based on their power and control over decision-making processes. The highest level on the ladder describes a stage of "citizens control" in which the citizens can "be in full charge of policy and managerial aspects, and be able to negotiate the conditions under which outsiders may change them." (Arnstein, 1969, p. 223) The participation hierarchy in this ladder and its revised versions (for example, Burns et al., 1994; Jones, 2003) indicates the roles of active citizens only based on their ability to control the outcome without much consideration of the process and actors' dynamics leading to the outcome.

In addition to classifying citizens' power and control, scholars have analyzed the practices of active residents to understand their possible effects on the governance process (for example, Ackerman, 2004; Arnouts, van der Zouwen, et al., 2012; T. J. M. Mattijssen et al., 2019). Four main approaches to citizen participation were highlighted: the user approach to participation; the self-provisioning approach; social and advocacy movements; and the accountability approach (Cornwall &

Gaventa, 2000). Other studies have analyzed the focus of active residents and their relationship with local government entities (see, Andrews & Turner, 2006; Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Chaskin & Greenberg, 2015; Teernstra & Pinkster, 2016; Walker, 2009). Based on these studies and the aforementioned main approaches to citizen participation (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2000), we deduced four roles of active residents, which have a distinct focus, nature of interaction with authorities, and power dynamics: (1) user; (2) self-provider; (3) advocate; and (4) maker.

The "user" role focuses on residents' involvement in neighborhood governance to enhance the efficiency of local services and urban improvements in the neighborhood. In this role, the interaction between citizens and authorities is based on consultation in which the active residents advise decision-makers on service performance and urban improvement plans (Walker, 2009). The residents shift from being only beneficiaries to becoming users whose feedback affects decision-making (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2000). There is a risk of a power imbalance between the active residents and the authorities in this role (Andrews & Turner, 2006). The consultative nature of the interaction limits residents' influence to only the enhancement of decision-makers' visions.

The "self-provider" role focuses on bridging the gap between the services and urban improvements provided by the state and residents' actual needs (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2000). In some cases, residents provide particular services as an option besides the state-provided ones. In other cases, residents meet a need entirely neglected by the state (Pestoff et al., 2006). In both cases, active residents depend on their resources, allowing them to be independent of the state's interference. The self-provider residents may coordinate with the state to comply with laws and regulations (Bovaird, 2007). However, they sometimes provide collective services in the complete absence of state involvement (for example, Mitlin, 2008). In a way, the independent nature of the interactions with local authorities grants the active residents a certain amount of control to improve neighborhoods in their own way.

The "advocate" role focuses on holding the state accountable for providing social and civil rights. These rights include the right to local services and urban improvements by the state and the right to engage citizens in making their neighborhoods better for themselves and others (Brannan et al., 2006). Advocate residents achieve their goals by putting pressure on local government actors for accountability and answerability. The advocate groups' practices can range from lobbying to public media campaigns, lawsuits, and protests. These practices may lead to confrontation-based interactions with local authorities. Such interactions may jeopardize the advocate group's ability to obtain support from (T. Mattijssen et al., 2018) and establish cooperation with the authorities (Chaskin & Greenberg, 2015).

Finally, the "maker" role focuses on active residents' contribution to creating local policies and actions for urban improvement in the neighborhood. It is a collaboration-based, co-productive role where the active residents directly participate in decision-making through deliberation (Chaskin & Greenberg, 2015). In this role, the residents pool their resources with those of the authorities. Therefore, both actors hold a certain amount of control and influence over the governance activity. The maker role is likely to be practiced through formal agreements and institutionalized spaces for citizens' participation in governance (for example, Ackerman, 2004).

Here, we want to emphasize that while these four roles are distinct, they are not mutually exclusive. Active residents can simultaneously 'display' more than one role in governance activities. We now turn to these governance activities and the way the four roles are represented in them.

5.3.2 The representation of active residents' roles in neighborhoods governance

Ideally, effective involvement of active residents in neighborhood governance embraces "both strategic and service planning and the detail of service delivery at neighborhood level." (Docherty et al., 2001, p. 2227) In practice, the governance activities that active residents can participate in and their role in these activities may be limited. Previous studies broke neighborhood governance into a wide range of activities such as planning urban improvements, design and delivery of services, financing and budget allocation, policymaking, regulation setting, operation and management, and monitoring and evaluation (see, Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012; Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006; Brannan et al., 2006; Burns et al., 1994; Silver et al., 2010; Silverman & Patterson, 2012). In these studies, the authors have used three main dimensions to encompass a wide range of governance activities: formulation, implementation, and management.

The "formulation" dimension consists of developing and deciding on local policies, urban improvement plans, and services in the neighborhood (Silver et al., 2010). In this dimension, the residents engage in the governance activities of prioritizing urban development goals, devising new policies or amending old ones, and setting local taxes, budget allocation, and land regulations (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012). The "implementation" dimension concerns the production and implementation of the decided plans and policies (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006). The residents engage in the governance activities of urban improvements' design details, funds

and resources, and actual execution (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012). Finally, the "management" dimension includes maintaining the implemented services and urban improvements. It includes the governance activities of operation, monitoring, and maintenance of local services and urban improvements (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006). Examples of residents' participation in this dimension are citizen report cards (Paul & Thampi, 2007), community management of public assets, and collaborative neighborhood inspection (see for example, IPS, 2021).

As these three dimensions contain specific governance activities, they provide clear spaces for locating active residents' practices within the neighborhood governance process in a given context. For instance, the involvement of Cairo's residents in the formulation dimension may occur in governance activities such as the district's yearly development plan, the city's urban improvement plans, local taxes or fee proposals, and amendments to building regulations. In the implementation dimension, Cairo's residents may engage in governance activities such as re-designing local streets and parks, funding urban improvements, or using their human resources to execute these improvements. As for the engagement in the management dimension, this may occur in governance activities such as requesting repairs, reporting violations on buildings and public spaces, and organizing local streets and gardens maintenance campaigns.

After deducing four main roles of active residents and three dimensions of neighborhood governance, we linked them into a theoretical framework. We extracted the governance activities found in the literature on the user, self-provider, advocate, and maker roles. We then determined the governance dimension in which these activities were located. As a result, we defined governance activities that represent these roles in each dimension (see Table 5.1)

As active resident groups are dynamic, the activities of a single group might translate into different roles in one local governance dimension or throughout the different dimensions. This framework helps us to explore the various roles of active residents in the context of Cairo. The framework is not intended as a strict mold in which the activities of residents must fit perfectly into these four roles. On the contrary, it is crucial to be open to finding activities from residents that may shape new roles.

TABLE 5.1 Different roles of active resident groups and their representation in the neighborhood governance process.

Dimensions of Neighborhood governance	Roles of active resident groups			
	User	Self-provider	Advocate	Maker
Formulation	• Comment on and review proposed plans and policies, and/ or • propose ideas for urban improvements.	Decide on policies, plans, and budgets.	• Pressure authorities to adopt specific policies and plans, and/ or • protest against policies and plans	Negotiate and deliberate on budget, policies, and plans.
Implementation	• Report low-quality implementation of urban improvements and services.	Execute and/ or fund services or urban improvements.	Oppose the designs and/ or execution of urban improvements and services.	Jointly supervise, implement, and fund urban improvements and services.
Management	• Report urban deterioration and service degradation.	Operate and maintain services and public spaces.	Protest against poor operation and maintenance of local services and public spaces.	Jointly monitor, operate, and maintain local services and urban improvements.

5.4 Methods and Data Collection

We used semi-structured interviews to enable local officials and active residents to express their perspectives on the role of active residents in neighborhood governance in Cairo. As neither official nor public records exist for active resident groups in Cairo, we used the groups identified in a recent study by the authors as the basis for finding active residents. The previous study identified 18 active resident groups in formal areas from 13 districts using desktop research on local newspapers and Facebook (Elwageeh, Kleinhans, et al., 2023). According to the General Organization of Physical Planning in Egypt, those formal areas have no unplanned or unsafe areas [5]. These active groups are concerned about their neighborhoods' urban deterioration and attempt to improve them. We distinguish between two types of groups: 1) organized active groups in the form of unions, associations, and cooperatives, and 2) unorganized groups that exist only on social media. Organized groups have a regulated organizational structure and formal channels to raise resources, as shown in Table 5.2.

5 Based on the "Unplanned Areas in the Main Urban Mass" map in (GOPP, 2012)

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TABLE 5.2 Types of organized active resident groups in Cairo.

	Unions	Associations	Cooperatives
Organizational Structure	• An elected board of directors • Occupants of apartments are members	• A board of directors • Subscribing residents are members • Limited possibility of subscribers from outside the neighborhood	• An elected board of directors • Owners of apartments are members
Resources	• Subscriptions from apartments • Donations	• Membership fees • Donations • Grants	• Bank revenues from maintenance deposits • Revenues from renting assets

The *unorganized* groups have names such as coalitions and initiatives. When these groups gather many online followers, the founders are encouraged to take action. Most unorganized groups have one or two fixed members who act as founders and administrators of the social media platform. These groups do not follow formal regulations allowing them to collect memberships or donations from people; thus, they rarely have financial resources. Later, three more groups were added, having been mentioned in residents' comments about the good practices of neighboring active groups. In total, 21 active resident groups were identified.

We targeted two active members (if available) from each active group. We approached the admins of the active groups on their social media platforms. Four groups from Alzaitoun, Helwan, May 15, and Ain Shams districts did not respond. Furthermore, the admin of a group in Alwaily district mentioned that they are not interested in discussing their activities due to their frustration with the many challenges they face with local authorities. We eventually interviewed 19 active members from 15 active resident groups in nine districts. They were all members of active groups that started in the years after 2011 except for Association (1) and (2) and Cooperative (1), see Appendix E for an overview of the respondents and the active groups.

The nine districts' construction and significant urban growth occurred in the 1800s and 1900s. As shown in Figure 5.2, the districts range from heritage value classified areas by the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) with unique architectural and urban characters and rich history to ordinary districts. They also range between districts in the central business district (CBD), thus home to many vital government buildings, city-scale vital institutions, commercial centers, and districts with municipal-scale importance. Based on residents' work occupation status, the socio-economic levels of these districts mostly range between the high and middle levels, except for two districts with mixed socio-economic levels (Abdelbasser A. Mohamed & Stanek, 2021). These districts' high and middle socio-economic levels were noticeable in the socio-economic level of the interviewed members. They were professionals in managerial-level occupations such as engineering, journalism, law, insurance, tourism, business, and administration.

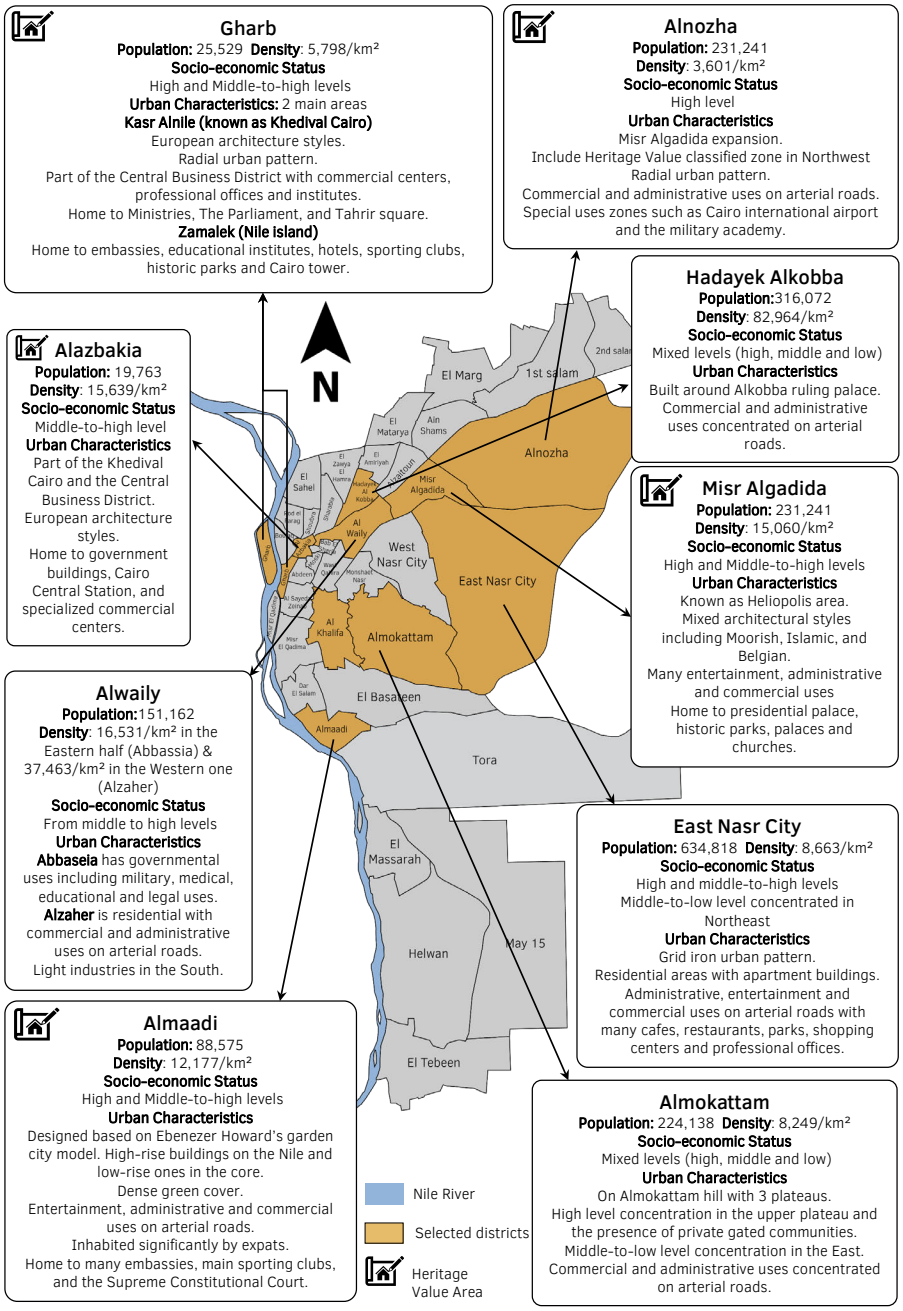

FIG. 5.2 An overview of the studied 9 districts. Source: Authors based on a map from cairo.gov.eg (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cairo300.jpg), colors and translation, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/ legalcode

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When selecting local officials, we targeted officials from the same districts as the active groups. By doing so, we included the active members and local officials who interacted with each other during data collection. We interviewed the heads of districts except for Alnozha district, as we interviewed a delegate.

The questions for the active members investigated the focus of their groups, their tactics to improve their neighborhoods, their interactions and relationships with local authorities, and the challenges they faced. The questions for officials investigated the forms of participation of active resident groups in improving the neighborhood, officials' reactions to the activities of these groups, the channels of communication with active groups, and the challenges of interacting with active groups. Appendix A and B provide the list of topics and suggested interview questions for the active members and local officials.

The interviews took place in 2019 and 2020. The local officials were contacted after acquiring security permits and endorsement letters from Ain Shams University in Cairo and Cairo governorate's office. Interviews with local officials took around 45–60 minutes, whereas interviews with active members took around 45–90 minutes. The active groups are anonymized and presented with a code containing the group's type of organization. Similarly, the interviewed officials and active members are referred to as official (no.) and member (no.), respectively. Appendix E provides an overview of the active groups and respondents' codes.

5.4.1 Data Processing

The interviews were in the Arabic language and were audio-recorded except for those of officials 6 and 7 and members 10, 17, and 19, who disagreed with being recorded. We transcribed the recorded interviews while we took notes during the unrecorded interviews and immediately afterward to document as much information as possible. Data processing included deductive coding based on the theoretical framework in Table 5.1 and exploratory open coding. These codings were followed by cross-case synthesis and comparison analyses.

From each interview, we extracted excerpts about governance activities that included the presence of active resident groups. Each governance activity was then coded to determine the governance dimension in which this activity was performed. After grouping all the governance activities in each dimension, we ran a second coding round to determine the role (i.e., user, advocate, self-provider, and maker) each of these activities represented. In addition to this coding, we adopted an open coding technique to allow for unanticipated governance activities or clear statements about the absence of governance activities.

In the cross-case synthesis and comparison analyses, we first grouped the excerpts describing each role from the interviews of active members. We compared them with each other to better understand the interactions between local actors in this role from the perspective of the active residents. The same analysis was conducted with the excerpts from the officials' interviews to better understand the interactions between local actors from the perspective of officials. Finally, we compared the roles of active residents identified from the officials' excerpts with those identified from the active members' excerpts to understand the similarities and differences in perspective of the two groups of respondents.

5.5 Results

The summary overview of roles is presented in Table 5.3. There are several particular findings. First of all, the interviews show that the "maker" role is not mentioned by any respondent, contrary to the other roles. Second, many respondents perceive no governance role at all for active resident groups, especially in the formulation dimension of governance. Third, respondents described a practice that combined some of the user, advocate, and maker characteristics and can be classified as a distinct role that we labeled 'fixer.' We will discuss this empirically-based extension of the original framework (see Table 5.1) in more detail below.

When focusing on the perceptions of the interviewed *officials*, we find a strong consensus within each dimension of neighborhood governance. Almost all officials agreed on "no role" for active residents in the formulation dimension, the "self-provider" role in the implementation and management dimensions, and the "fixer" role in the management dimension. This consensus is interesting, especially with officials highlighting the absence of government rules for dealing with active residents and involving civil society in local governance. This consensus suggests the presence of a general perspective on citizens' involvement at the local government level, even if it is undeclared.

As for the active members' perceptions, they generally described more roles than the officials. The activities of most active groups are limited to two roles across the governance dimensions, except for three active groups from Almaadi, Misr Algadida, and ENC districts that played three roles. Likewise, most groups' activities represented one role within each dimension except for a few that diversified their activities and described two roles. Next, we focus on each role and explain in more detail how the local actors perceived it in the context of neighborhood governance in Cairo.

TABLE 5.3 Roles of active resident groups in the neighborhood governance process in Cairo as identified by active members and officials.

District	Active Group Code	Roles of active resident groups in the dimensions of neighborhood governance					
		Formulation		Implementation		Management	
		Active members	District officials	Active members	District officials	Active members	District officials
Alwaily	UG (3)	No role	User	No role	Self-provider	Fixer	Fixer
Misr Algadida	Association (1)	User & Advocate		Self-provider & Advocate		Fixer	Self-provider & Fixer
Alnozha	UG (1)	No role	No role	No role		Fixer	
	UG (2)	Advocate		Advocate			
Hadayek Alkobba	UG (4)	User		No role		Fixer	
Alazbakia	Union (1)	No role		Self-provider		Self-provider & Fixer	
Almaadi	Association (2)	Advocate		Self-provider & Advocate		Self-provider & Fixer	
	Union (2)			Self-provider		Self-provider	
Almokattam	UG (5)	User		No role		No role	
ENC	UG (8)	No role		User		Fixer	
	UG (6)			Self-provider			
	UG (7)					Self-provider & Fixer	
	Union (3)						
	Cooperative	Advocate					
Gharb	Association (3)	No role		Self-provider		Fixer	

5.5.1 No role for active residents

When respondents were asked about resident groups' contribution to governance activities such as setting the yearly plan or prioritizing the urban improvements for the districts, many officials and some members considered these activities as tasks only performed by "professional" district officials.

The residents have nothing to do with the yearly plan [...]. District office directors set priorities according to the degree of deterioration. They are engineers who know everything in the district, street by street (Official 1).

We do not follow the district office's activities or interfere in their plans […]. As a citizen, I cannot say to an official that I want to do this and that in this street now. These decisions are beyond our competence. Specialized government authorities are responsible for the district and set the needed plans—neither you nor I (Member 5).

Some officials added that residents' presence in the formulation governance dimension is unbeneficial as it is impossible to satisfy all the residents. Similarly, some members regarded their interference in such governance activities as a lost cause as politicians and governmental entities have the power to influence policies and urban improvement plans and designs, unlike civil society.

I hope one of the residents following our group will be a Parliament member […] When these members ask officials for a service specific to a neighborhood, the next day, their requests are addressed (Member 2).

Few members continued to perceive no role for active residents in the implementation and management dimensions. Besides the aforementioned power imbalance, they regarded exerting efforts in implementing urban improvements alone or collaborating with the local authorities as unproductive since implementing urban improvements is strongly linked to later managing these improvements. As such, they do not perceive a possible role for the active resident in implementation if the active group cannot guarantee appropriate management of the implemented improvements either by them or the local government.

We want to cooperate with the district office in planting trees on the sidewalk […] But if we were to put money and effort into the neighborhood, there must be something in return. Someone should look after these trees. We do not want to find them damaged after a few months. Will there be anyone who looks after them, or will this work be for nothing (Member 11)?

5.5.2 The "user" role of the active residents

The "user" role was described in the formulation dimension by a few officials and members and in the implementation dimension by one active member only. The members described this role as an "outlet, channel, and platform" for the residents to present their suggestions for urban improvement. In the formulation dimension, active groups post suggestions on their social media platforms or propose them to the district office. However, active residents are aware that they do not have any power to influence officials' adoption of these suggestions.

We (groups' admins and members) only post ideas on the page and hope an official will see them, but we don't address a particular official […] We suggested that the head of the district should be elected. Or that the fixed amount that residents pay for garbage collection should not go to the ministry but to district offices and be used for local street cleanups […] Unfortunately, local officials cannot do anything regarding these suggestions. These are state policy issues that need to change on higher levels. We hope someone from our followers can reach out to someone "up there" and adopt these ideas (Member 4).

The officials mentioned that the ideas posted by active resident groups on social media platforms are sometimes beneficial. They described them as a "reference, indicator, and guide" to the needs of the residents throughout the year. The districts' employees may refer to these ideas while setting the annual plan without involving the residents. These groups were neither present at the meetings nor asked by the officials to share their ideas for formulating the annual plan. Furthermore, they were not even informed of what the officials claimed as plans inspired by active residents' ideas. Even when authorities consulted Association (1) in the urban renovation of some buildings and squares, their ideas and comments were neglected when the officials disagreed with them.

Only one member from UG (8) described a "user" role in the implementation dimension by reporting issues related to corruption in the district office or the failure of the district office's employees to apply laws and procedures.

A contractor used poor material in street pavement work. There was no technical supervision from the district office. I took a technical report made by a resident and reported it to the Public Prosecution office […] Exposing these violations take time, as the accused department may avoid the accusation once or twice. Hopefully, authorities will investigate these violations seriously when we report the same issue repeatedly (Member 18).

5.5.3 The "advocate" role of the active residents

According to some members, the "advocate" role exists in the formulation and implementation dimensions. In this role, the active groups practice what they describe as the right to "defend, protect, and fight for" their districts against the government's plans, designs, and implementation of urban improvements. As previously explained, only the government formulates urban improvement plans for districts. In many cases, these plans are not only contrary to the residents'

needs and aspirations for their neighborhoods, but they also reduce the existing urban quality. As a reaction, some active groups play an "advocate" role to stop or alter these plans. They use social media campaigns, petitions, and mediating parliament members and high-profile officials to influence government decisions. Only Association (2) resorted to litigation in a few incidents, and all groups avoided organizing protests or public gatherings.

The active members who described this role are in districts with heritage value classification, such as Misr Algadida, Almaadi, and Alnozha. This classification is an important motivator to these groups, and they often use it to strengthen their opposition to any urban transformation that threatens the heritage value of their district.

Last year, the district office issued 40 demolition permits for villas in one month, so we (association members) felt terrified of constructing high-rise buildings instead of these villas. Such construction would transform the heritage value and urban fabric, which was unacceptable. Another group and ours organized a meeting for the residents with the district official, but it turned into a frantic one, and verbal accusations took place. Most of the active groups became discouraged afterward (Member 9).

Despite describing this advocate role in the Cairo context, the active members expressed the difficulty of practicing it or having a tangible impact on the neighborhood. According to them, the higher the level of the government entity that develops an urban improvement plan, the more difficult it is to oppose the plan. For instance, the two neighboring districts of Misr Algadida and Alnozha were part of the government's plan to connect the main agglomeration with the NAC. Despite Association (1) opposition to this plan, it was implemented rapidly without any modifications.

We (association members) fought on social media and television, and we talked to officials from the governorate. Even the NOUH, responsible for protecting our neighborhood, did not know anything about these projects. All entities did not know what was happening […] We have limits on escalating actions. People used to organize protests, but now there is no choice. We can only appeal to a Parliament member, but who can stand in front of (X)[6] ?[…] Even litigation is useless because we will make a lawsuit regarding what? The damage was already made (Member 8).

6 An entity with sovereign power that lately became involved in most the state's urban projects.

No official referred to an "advocate" role for the active residents. When we asked them about the active groups that opposed urban improvement projects, they perceived their actions negatively. Some officials saw the "advocate" groups as often biased against the government's plans without knowing the general vision for the governorate or waiting to see the results. Other officials stated that active groups should stop questioning the government's vision for developing the district and appreciate its efforts despite the limited resources. The officials used expressions such as "acknowledge the efforts of the state," "focus on advantages," and "do not doubt the state's achievements" to highlight what they would rather expect from the active resident groups.

5.5.4 The "self-provider" role of active residents

The "self-provider" role dominates the officials' and many members' perceptions of the role of active residents in the implementation and management dimensions. There are two types of self-provided urban improvements in Cairo. The first and most dominant type is intermittent campaigns for paving, tiling, repainting facades and walls, planting trees, and upgrading parks. When we asked respondents about the motivation behind these activities, they explained that their groups initiated these campaigns after realizing the limited resources of district offices to improve and maintain the district. It may take years until the needed urban improvements get a turn in the district's annual plan.

Whenever we (groups' admins) approach the district office with a request, they apologize that they do not have enough resources and workers […] So, we said if the government would not help us and their resources are limited, we will rely on ourselves and improve the area (Member 13).

The second type of self-provided urban improvement is offering an extra service to address a negative phenomenon, such as private security services to reduce robbery and prevent informal street vendors and tuk-tuks from entering the neighborhood. In this type, active groups implement urban improvements and extend their activities to operate and maintain them. The members who mentioned this role regarded it as the only way to independently provide services and urban improvements and thus ensured the stable quality of life they desired.

Our properties were being robbed, and our families were at risk of kidnapping. No one would have done it for us if we (residents) had not acted (regarding the security issue) […] There are priority needs. Sustaining the security service is the number one priority (Member 15).

According to respondents, the "self-provider" role requires financial and human resources and a legal status that allows regular fundraising. If the active residents can achieve these conditions, they can acquire permits from the district office for their intended urban improvement. The importance of these conditions explains why most active members who described it were from organized active groups. Nevertheless, raising resources and acquiring legal status is difficult to achieve and were the main challenges highlighted by the active members.

We (Union's board of directors) can only cover 65% (of the monthly expenses). We have a financial shortage, and I sometimes cover the deficit with my money (Member 6).

The laws allow for establishing unions, but we (Union's founders) could not find anyone to help us (with the procedures) at the beginning of the process. There is a flaw in the law. Because even when many residents wanted us to start a union, it became difficult to get a delegation from 25% of the residents [...] Many people refrained from giving us a copy of their ID to prove their delegation. Few active groups can fulfill the conditions to become unions (Member 15).

The self-provided improvements are often at risk of discontinuation and deterioration after a short period because the active groups cannot look after them. This risk of discontinuation is more prominent when an unorganized group plays this role, such as UG (7).

We (group members) did campaigns to clean the streets, paint electrical rooms and fences, and install road signs [...] But we cannot always rely on ourselves to bring workers and tools, so we can only do this occasionally (Member 13).

The officials described the active groups who perform this role as "partners and supporters" of the government. District offices occasionally support these self-provision activities with workers and vehicles from the office. According to them, this role alleviates the burdens of the district offices to some extent and provides solutions outside their bureaucratic procedures and weak resources. Furthermore, some officials favored this role to the extent of blaming the residents for not playing it more often when expressing their opinions on active groups' involvement in the urban improvement of districts.

When the office improves an area, the residents react: You fixed this, but you neglected that! This is useless, we do the bigger part, and you, as citizens, work together and complete the rest (Official 1).

The officials emphasized the importance of extending this role to cover the maintenance and operation of implemented urban improvements. For them, this extension is a stable form of residents' active participation, unlike the irregular campaigns from some active groups.

5.5.5 The "fixer" role of the active residents

All the officials and most active members described a particular role for active resident groups in (only) the management dimension that did not align well with the predefined four roles (see Table 5.1). We named this role "fixer" as it focuses on fixing problems with services and urban deterioration directly, quickly, and at the lowest local government level. Officials described the groups in this role as "detectors, reporters, and monitors" of the problems in the district. In this role, active residents detect problems in the neighborhood and report them to the district office for necessary actions. These problems include broken down lighting poles, garbage piles, sewage floodings, damaged sidewalks, deteriorated parks and unlicensed tuk-tuks, street vendors, and commercial activities. When we asked about the relevance of this role, many active members expressed that it is the essential way their active groups contribute to improving the neighborhood and serving the residents.

We (group admins) are the link between the residents and the officials responsible for solving residents' complaints. We deliver the complaint, request a response, and return with an answer to the resident [...] This is how we try to play a role in improving our neighborhood. We pursue residents' complaints to the end of the road (Member 1).

The "fixer" role is practiced in two stages. First, the active group reports residents' complaints to the district office's employees. At this stage, the members describe themselves as "links, coordinators, and mediators" between the residents and officials. By doing this, they ensure that the relevant departments in the district office are aware of the complaints. The residents share any urban deterioration extensively on the active groups' platforms.

We (Union's board) made more than 386 reports in four months regarding sewerage and more than 148 reports for street lighting [...] We are quick, and social media has achieved it. The entire population of the area is on our Facebook page [...] When a resident sees a problem on his way to work, he takes a photo and informs us. I make a phone call and trigger the solution to the problem (Member 15).

Second, the active groups persistently follow up on complaints and, as they describe, "insist" on a response from the officials. When we asked about the basis of this insisting tactic, most active members highlighted their capitalization on personal connections with officials, local leaders, and journalists to push the district office. They also described a balance between urging officials to respond to their complaints and avoiding clashing with and risking losing their connection with officials.

The main purpose is to serve the residents. We (groups' admins) focus on the problem. A problem might be garbage piled up in the street. The goal is to remove it, not criticize and insult the officials. If the resident's goal is to solve the problem, we will report it to officials without causing scandals […] From experience, officials welcome a friendly attitude (Member 5).

The "fixer" role is perceived positively by respondents as many groups adopt it, and officials interact positively with it. Many respondents considered it a constructive form of activism instead of what they described as "just spreading negativity." Even some officials perceived the resident who requested repairs deserved to be answered as opposed to the passive resident.

The Facebook group is not just a platform to only complain about our problems. No, we need positivity […] We communicate the critical problems to the official directly, and frankly, I must say, they respond (Member 1).

When a person asks for cleanliness in his area, if the office answers, he will maintain it, but for those who do not ask, I (district office) will clean, and they will throw the garbage the next day, so I give priority to the ones who ask for the service (Official 3).

In the "fixer" role, the relationship between the active residents and officials carries the notions of mutual dependence. The officials encourage the "fixer" groups by allowing various communication channels, such as the complaints center in the district office, Facebook pages, and private WhatsApp groups with the leaders of active groups. Despite this, many members complained about the lack of answerability from officials sometimes or the repetition of the same complaint without permanent repairs despite their persistent reporting and follow-up activities. These increased complaints indicated that active members are dissatisfied with the effectiveness of the "fixer" role.

The district office always welcomes us and promises to solve the problem, but nothing happens afterward […] We keep reporting the absence of the district's gardeners. Sometimes, they do not send anyone. Sometimes when we insist, they send a few gardeners, but they stay for three or four days and then disappear again (Member 13).

When we asked the active members about the feasibility of continuing with this role despite their dissatisfaction, they highlighted that playing this role helps solve urban deterioration problems without clashing with officials. Even with temporal repairs, the occasional answerability from officials encourages active groups to continue adopting this role.

I do not say that we are in heaven, but a fair number of problems were solved when we (group admins) reported them. Honestly, it is not always effective. But we can not interfere and will not interfere in how authorities do their job (Member 1).

Not only do active groups significantly depend on the fixer role, but also officials depend on the "fixer" active groups to perform one of their primary functions in operation and maintenance. District offices usually fail to monitor problems and follow up on repairs. Consequently, officials perceive the "fixer" role as complementary to the district office employees. Officials describe these active groups as the "eyes" of the district office in the area.

The (district) office has four employees who perform the monitoring task, but how could they cover the whole district? [...] The active residents monitor the area with my employees (Official 2).

Many members whose groups play a "fixer" role added that they reward the officials by publishing the actions taken by the district offices on their platforms. Such public appreciation encourages officials to welcome the "fixer" role for active resident groups as it improves their public image.

Now, when we (group admins) go again to the official, he is ready to cooperate more and is happy because he knows that we will share the (district) office's response with the residents and the people will listen to us (Member 3).

The deduced characteristics of the "fixer" role from respondents combine some attributes of the "user," "advocate," and "maker" roles. The "fixer" residents report urban deterioration as "users"; however, they take a step further by following up on these reports. By doing this, the "fixer" residents insist on answerability and responsiveness from local officials. In doing so, the residents sometimes resort to protest activities, through media coverage and campaigns, as "advocates." However, "fixer" groups avoid confrontations that jeopardize their relationship with local officials. Finally, the "fixer" role displays mutual dependence and joint activities between residents and officials. This dependency suggests similarities with the joint monitoring and maintenance activities of the "maker" role. However, in these joint activities, the "fixer" residents do not share power and influence with

officials. Although officials depend on the reporting and follow-up activities of the "fixer" residents to compensate for the district offices' shortcomings, the "fixer" groups cannot directly or officially influence the actions of the offices. We found these combined characteristics shared among the respondents who described this repeated form of involvement from active groups. Therefore, we believe that such an involvement represents a standalone role (i.e., the "fixer" role) of the active resident groups in the management dimension that copes with the challenging neighborhood governance arrangements in Cairo.

5.6 Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the roles of active residents in the neighborhood governance process and how these roles unfold in Cairo's challenging context for citizen involvement in public affairs. We initially developed a theoretical framework to identify possible roles of active residents and the representation of these roles in the neighborhood governance process. We applied this framework to interviews with local officials and active residents from nine districts to analyze the extent to which the user, self-provider, advocate, and maker roles from the literature were present. Conceptually, this analysis showed the necessity to extend the framework with a fifth role, the "fixer."

Empirically, the analysis reveals (1) the absence of the "maker" role; (2) the existence of "advocate," "user," and "self-provider" roles in limited dimensions of governance; and 3) the strong emergence of a "fixer" role in the management dimension. These results suggest that Cairo's challenging context not only partially limits specific roles but also leads to commonalities in the existing roles as the active groups cope with the context. Respondents revealed that active residents mostly play the "fixer" and "self-provider" roles in the neighborhood governance process. These two roles are limited to helping local government to perform management and implementation activities. Furthermore, these results suggest that Cairo's challenging context motivates active residents to develop tactics that shape new roles. In our case, the active groups consistently combined some characteristics from different roles and practiced them repeatedly, which we believe constitutes a standalone role (i.e., the "fixer" role).

Despite the significance of the "self-provider" role among our respondents, it is highly dependent on the ability of active residents to secure resources, meet the legal requirements for raising funds, and fulfill the responsibilities of service provision. Therefore, this role is limited to small-scale urban improvements and is taken on only sporadically. The respondents revealed the "fixer" role, which we later found to be related to the concept of "everyday fixer." The "everyday fixer" is a problem-solving role that focuses on immediately fixing the physical and visible problems at the lowest level of local administration possible. Studies on "everyday fixer" describe it as a role taken up by active individuals, whereas our findings suggest that this description may actually extend to active groups. In reference to social exchange theory (Mohammadi et al., 2010), the "fixer" role achieves a win-win situation in contexts where active groups struggle to have any role in neighborhood governance. It allows the active groups to solve the management-related problems in their neighborhood without clashing with authorities. Simultaneously, it allows the authorities to improve their public image when they respond to problems that can mostly be solved with simple or temporary solutions.

We started this paper with the observation of countries and cities whose political context discourages active citizen engagement in governance. For the case of Cairo, we conclude that broader political and security concerns prioritize the stability of the regime and its governing system over citizen engagement in governance. Our results clearly show how this prioritization limits the potential of residents' involvement in all dimensions of neighborhood governance, particularly in the formulation of policies, strategies, and service delivery. In other words, the possible space for active residents to exist and impact neighborhood governance is limited to the implementation and management dimensions, where they can only act as "fixers" or "self-providers." This limited space and confined roles improve the symptoms of urban deterioration without addressing the underlying policies and plans that led to the issues. These findings raise questions about the possible trajectory of active resident groups toward citizens' engagement in local governance in Cairo. The limited roles of active resident groups only temporarily improve service quality in the short term. However, in the long term, they carry the risk of stabilizing the same defective local governance regime and the resultant deterioration in urban quality.

In the mid of 1980s, a study on Cairo found that many low-class neighborhood residents relied on informal institutions and networks to improve their living conditions by using personal relationships with government officials, Parliament members, political parties, or religious figures. These relationships effectively affected the distribution of limited public resources while being less visible and thus less risky in politically repressive contexts (Singerman, 1995). In 2020, our findings showed an extended reliance on informal networks among higher-class

neighborhoods. The results showed that some active residents established a legal entity for their groups and used formal channels such as complaining on government portals and submitting official requests. However, as these channels alone are no longer accessible or safe, other groups still managed to improve their neighborhoods to some extent while using informal channels. They took the form of unorganized groups whose presence is on less detectable platforms such as social media. They also capitalized on building personal relationships with district employees and the mediation of the active members' connections with politicians, state officials, and army and police personnel.

The results of this study must be seen within its cross-sectional nature and the research limitations in the politically challenging context of Egypt. First, as the informal and less visible patterns of local activism seem to spread in the neighborhoods of Cairo, the lack of official or public records of active resident groups limits our research. We had to rely on the active groups we could detect on social media and whose members agreed to be interviewed. We could only interview members from 15 out of the 21 active groups identified. Having said that, as we found common descriptions of specific activities in specific dimensions of local governance among our respondents, we believe our results uncover the common roles and frequent practices of local activism in Cairo's formal neighborhoods. Due to its cross-sectional nature, our study does not cover the longitudinal variation or change in the roles of the studied active groups.

This study contributes to the literature by providing a structured and zoomed-out view of the roles active residents could play in Cairo. The uncovered roles in specific governance dimensions act as a sample card map of how local activism is practiced in neighborhoods in Cairo and can be used as a starting point for scholars and decision-makers interested in improving local activism. Further research may focus on tracing the identified roles and investigating why they exist in this manner in order to identify the challenges and constraints in current local governance arrangements. Answering this question may identify the possible interventions to reinforce the existing roles and allow for absent ones. Having said that, any improvement in the active role of residents in local governance in politically challenging contexts necessitates political will. This will may allow for interventions in the governance, educational, and public awareness policies that shift the culture of citizens' engagement towards more existence of local activism in society.

6 The Influence of Local Governance Practices on Shaping Local Activism in a Challenging Context

6.1 Introduction

There is an increasing academic and policy interest in the role of active residents in local governance. Residents' involvement in urban governance is an integral part of citizens' rights for better urban quality of cities and local services. The neighborhood scale is considered an important geographical scale at which the practices of active residents at local levels appear (Durose & Lowndes, 2010; Jupp, 2012). Local activism refers to all sorts of activities by resident groups who seek to play an active role in improving their neighborhoods. Local activism ranges from collaborating with existing governance arrangements to confronting and challenging them (Yip et al., 2019). It may occur through institutional channels such as voting, hearing forums, litigation, protest, and media. Alternatively, active residents can use non-institutional channels, such as squatting in public spaces and illegal infrastructure and amenities extensions (Bayat, 2013). Local activism can be loud, vocal, and publicly visible activities or quiet and hidden, avoiding public exposure

(Lopez, 2019). All these forms of local activism are context-based (Miraftab, 2012), and the choice of activities partly depends on the relationship between local authorities and active resident groups.

Local activism can be challenging when authoritarian regimes discourage residents' engagement in urban governance and undermine residents' rights to local activism. The few studies in such authoritarian contexts suggest a distinct form of local activism in which the assumptions of protected civil rights, freedom of speech, and independent legislators and local authorities cannot be found (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Gaventa, 2006; Yip et al., 2019). For instance, Elwageeh, Van Ham, et al. (2023) found that active resident groups help local governments to carry on maintenance and implementation functions without influencing the policy formulation in the neighborhood governance process in Cairo city, located within an authoritarian context. In these functions, active resident groups intermittently restore existing services or self-provide services. These findings highlighted the aspects of local activism limitedness in a politically challenging context and its service quality orientation. Despite these insights into the limited forms of local activism, we found no studies investigating why exactly these limited and service quality-oriented forms exist.

Some studies link the limited and service quality-oriented activism to the political environment in authoritarian contexts, which is unfamiliar -and sometimes hostile- to citizens' involvement in public affairs (Steve Connelly, 2010; El-Azzazy & Zaazaa, 2017). These studies suggest that such a political environment creates local governance practices that alienate local actors from activism (Bayat, 2013; Watson, 2009). Elwageeh, Kleinhans, et al. (2023) recommended that any desire to stimulate local activism and diversify its forms necessitates a better understanding of the local governance practices in such contexts and the constraints they impose on local activism. Local governance practices are the adopted "ensemble of doings, sayings, and things" (T. Mattijssen, 2018, p. 31) regarding the steering and realization of public policies and services among multiple actors on a local level. This ensemble enables or constrains local actors' activities and interactions with each other. Thus, local governance practices signal to actors which activities are approved or disapproved regarding local activism in a specific context (Blanco et al., 2021; Lowndes & Wilson, 2001).

This paper aims to better understand the influence of local governance practices on local activism in a politically challenging context. Since "context" is central to shaping local actors' practice of activism in urban governance, this study adopts a case study methodology. We focus on Cairo city as a case representing an authoritarian regime with a challenging state-citizen relationship. Using the policy

arrangement approach (PAA) and the "practice" concept, we analyze the perspective of local officials and members from active resident groups in Cairo regarding the city's local governance practice and its influence on the activities of active resident groups.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 6.2 provides an overview of the limited local activism in the neighborhoods of Cairo. Section 6.3 focuses on developing a theoretical framework regarding local governance practices and their influence on local activism. Section 6.4 explains the methods of data collection and processing used to apply the theoretical framework to interviews with local actors from nine districts in the city of Cairo. Section 6.5 analyses the separate components of local governance practice in Cairo. Section 6.6 explains how these components work together and influence local activism. Finally, Section 6.7 discusses the results regarding the influence of local governance practice on local activism in politically challenging contexts.

6.2 A brief overview of limited local activism in Cairo

Cairo is Egypt's capital, the Arab world's largest city, and one of the most populated cities in Africa. With a population of over 10 million (CAPMAS, 2022), Cairo is densely populated and continues to grow rapidly and uncontrollably (Abdelbaseer A Mohamed et al., 2014). Such rapid urban growth pressures the city's amenities and accelerates the deterioration of the built environment (GOPP, 2012). The authorities address these challenges poorly due to centralized governance, a lack of citizen engagement, flawed prioritization of urban development goals, and low budget allocations to districts (Néfissa, 2009; Shawkat & Hendawy, 2017; Sims, 2012). As a result, many neighborhoods in Cairo suffer from urban deterioration related to garbage collection, sewerage management, road pavements, street lighting, public park management, and public space infringements (Elwageeh, Kleinhans, et al., 2023).

Many of the local activism in Cairo is motivated by the urban deterioration that negatively affects residents' everyday lives in terms of commuting time, sense of safety, public health, and exposure to a visually polluted image of their city. Active

resident groups in Cairo focus on improving, maintaining, and beautifying their neighborhoods. Many of these active resident groups started spontaneously on social media platforms after the 2011 revolution (El-Meehy, 2012), capitalizing on peaked social and political mobilization. The residents joined these platforms to share concerns, news, aspirations, and suggestions to improve the city and their neighborhoods (Ibrahim & Singerman, 2014). They translated these ideas into initiatives on the ground (see for examples, Shawkat et al., 2015; Stadnicki, 2015). However, the following regimes' repressive practices to control the public sphere constrained urban activism in Egypt (Demerdash, 2021; Harb, 2019; Stadnicki, 2016), which made some of these groups disappear.

Despite the presence of these active resident groups for years, most studies on urban activism in Cairo focused on the activities led by urban experts, academics, and professionals (El-Azzazy & Zaazaa, 2017; Harb, 2019; Ibrahim, 2014; Zaazaa, 2019). Little is known about the local activism of ordinary residents with less formalized groups who earned local public recognition in their areas from activities on the ground and on social media. Few studies discussed their strategies and tactics to self-provide for the necessary maintenance of local services (El-Meehy, 2012; Galal Ahmed, 2019; Wahby, 2021). Elwageeh, Van Ham, et al. (2023) also highlighted the 'fixer' role of active groups that cannot self-fund maintenance. In the fixer role, active residents detect the damage, malfunctions, and violations in the neighborhood and report them to district offices. They relentlessly follow up on these reports and use their networks to pressure local officials into fixing these problems. Such findings detailed how local activism is limited to helping the local government maintain and manage neighborhoods and is confined to the roles of self-providers and fixers in Cairo. These studies better understand the existing forms of local activism and suggest the influence of the post-2011 repressive practices. However, we found no specific studies combining these repressive practices with the local governance practice in general and analyzing their influence in producing such specific forms of activism.

6.3 A framework for analyzing the influence of local governance practices on local activism

Arts et al. (2013, p. 9) define practice in general as "an ensemble of *doings*, *sayings,* and *things* in a specific field of activity." Local governance is the process of governing communities in which multiple actors steer and realize the public policies and services on the local spatial levels (Somerville, 2011). Local governance practices are the ensemble of doings, sayings, and things related to steering and realizing public policies and services among multiple actors on the district level. These three elements encompass human elements, such as actors, language, and actions, and non-human elements, such as tools and rules in governance (Arts et al., 2013). The "ensemble" notion refers to the sum of doings, sayings, and things and how these elements affect each other and relate to the broader social and political context.

Local activism relates to local governance practices as resident groups' activities are a part of the *doings* element forming local governance practices. Simultaneously, local governance practices influence the activities of local actors, thus influencing local activism. This influence happens as local actors observe the local governance arrangements in the context and adapt their behaviors and activities to these arrangements, which they usually copy and reproduce from one another (Blanco et al., 2021). The more restricted the "doings, saying, and things" related to local governance are in a context, the more local activism becomes challenging. Building on this link between local governance practices and local activism, we reviewed the literature to find the "policy arrangement approach" as an established approach for studying governance practices covering their three elements: doings, sayings, and things, which we will explain next.

6.3.1 The policy arrangement approach as an analytical tool

Arts et al. (2000) conceived the "Policy Arrangement Approach" (PAA) to study the dynamics inside environmental policy arrangements. Later, many scholars adapted this approach as an analytical tool to study different governance processes (see, Arnouts, van der Zouwen, et al., 2012; Ayana, 2014; Buizer, 2008; T. Mattijssen, 2018) and real-life examples of sustainable neighborhoods (Hajer et al., 2020). PAA is "the temporary stabilization of the organization and substance of a policy domain at a specific level of policy-making" (Arts et al., 2000, p. 54).

PAA studies how a specific domain -local governance in our case- is temporarily shaped. A PAA approach combines organization and substance in its analysis by covering four interrelated dimensions: rules, resources, actors (organization), and discourse (substance) (Arts et al., 2000; Leeuwen, 2010).

PAA is a suitable analytical approach for two reasons. First, PAA offers a comprehensive framework that includes organization and substance components to understand governance in an ongoing policy domain (Arts et al., 2006). This framework enables the four dimensions of the PAA to effectively address the human (*sayings* and *doings*) and non-human (*things*) elements in local governance practice. PAA also recognizes that organization and substance are interrelated, which resonates with the "ensemble" notion in local governance practices. Second, PAA employs the concept of "arrangements," which exhibits a certain degree of stability (Arts et al., 2000), which is essential to identify the repeated patterns of sayings, doings, and things in local governance practices. Simultaneously, PAA recognizes the temporality of such patterns in dynamic governance processes, which correspond to the potential of enhancing local activism by changing local governance practices. For instance, changing one of the PAA elements, such as introducing a new actor, causes shifts in the doings, sayings, and things regarding local governance, which affects the whole practice positively or negatively (Van Tatenhove & Leroy, 2003).

Table 6.1 presents the combination of PAA and the "practice" concept into our theoretical framework to better understand the local governance practice in a specific context. The "rules" and "resources" dimensions represent the non-human elements in the local governance practices (i.e., the *things*). The rules focus on the laws, regulations, and informal procedures (Arnouts et al., 2012), co-determining what is required, permitted, or prohibited within a particular setting in the local governance process (Blanco et al., 2021). Additionally, rules allocate specific resources and responsibilities to certain actors, influencing resource distribution and creating an organizational structure – vertical or horizontal- among actors (Leeuwen, 2010). The resources focus on the material and human assets actors can obtain from different sources and use to achieve their goals (T. Mattijssen et al., 2018). Initially, the "actors" dimension examines the key individuals or organizations involved in local governance, their interactions (Ayana, 2014), and whether these interactions form supporting or challenging coalitions (Buizer, 2008) in a context. In this dimension, we also include actors' roles in local governance to highlight their activities in improving neighborhoods (i.e., the *doings* in local governance). Finally, the "discourse" dimension focuses on the ideas, concepts, and narratives produced by the actors that give meaning to local governance in a certain context (Hajer, 1995; Veenman et al., 2009). We employ it to explore the *sayings* in local governance by investigating local actors' experiences with the local governance

process, including their challenges and approaches to handling them. It reflects how the actors perceive the rules, evaluate their resources and value the interaction with each other.

TABLE 6.1 The combination of the PAA and "practice" concept into a theoretical framework to better understand the local governance practice in a context.

Local governance practices are an ensemble of	Explanation	Corresponding dimension(s) in the PAA
Things	The non-human elements in the local governance practices that support or challenge the actors in the local governance process	**Rules** • Formal laws and regulations • Informal procedures such as verbal agreements and favoritism
		Resources • Material such as money, tools, and equipment
Doings	The activities of the main actors that contribute to the local governance process	**Actors** • The involved actors • Their roles • Their interactions with others
Sayings	The narratives of involved actors regarding the meaning of the local governance process	**Discourse** Actors' descriptions of: • The challenges they face in the process • Their approaches to these challenges

After analyzing the four dimensions of the PAA, we discuss how this knowledge could be interpreted to uncover the impact of local government practices on local activism. According to Blanco et al. (2021), specific governance arrangements influence citizens by incentivizing specific activities and discouraging others. In this study, the influence of governance arrangements on local activism is uncovered by analyzing the interrelatedness of the four dimensions of the PAA.

The arrangement of rules, resources, actors, and discourse has many possible effects. Leeuwen (2010) explained the possible effects of PAA dimensions on each other and actors' activities. When rules allocate specific resources and responsibilities unevenly among the actors, they cause an imbalance in the power relations between the active groups and local authorities. This arrangement alone may discourage local activism that depends on residents' cooperation with the government and even incentivize activism that is isolated from the government instead. Nevertheless, residents' evaluation of their resources and agency determines the vulnerability of such isolated forms of local activism. Even further, the governance arrangement may cause the abandonment of specific forms of local activism as they are banned by laws or repressed informally by the authorities.

Defining such links between the rules, resources, discourse, and actors uncover the exact effect of local governance practice on active residents' activities (i.e., local activism).

In summary, we apply the PAA in two stages. First, we examine the rules, resources, actors, and discourse related to local governance on the scale of neighborhoods with a previously identified presence of local activism. Second, we examine the interrelations between these rules, resources, actors, and discourse to uncover their effect on local activism. Applying this framework in Cairo enables us to identify the arrangements shaping local governance practice and their effects on active residents. Thus, we can better understand where the limited scope of local activism and its service quality orientation in Cairo is coming from.

6.4 Methods and Data Collection

6.4.1 Data Collection

We adopted a qualitative research approach, using semi-structured interviews with local officials and active residents. Interviews as a data collection approach were essential to enable these actors to describe and elaborate on their experiences with local governance in Cairo.

As neither official documentation nor public records exist for active resident groups in Cairo, we depended on the Google search engine, where news reports on a few active resident groups are found. The results directed us to platforms for active resident groups on Facebook. The significant presence of Facebook is expected due to its prominent role in the 2011 revolution (AlSayyad & Guvenc, 2015). During 2018 and 2019, 18 active resident groups concerned with the urban deterioration of their neighborhoods and attempting to improve them were identified. Later, three more groups from Almaadi and East Nasr City (ENC) and Alnozha districts were added as they were mentioned by the residents in the comments referring to the good practice of neighboring active groups in their districts. We identified 21 active resident groups from 13 districts.

The active groups ranged between organized and unorganized one. The organized groups are registered as associations, unions, or cooperatives. They are non-profit groups with elected board members and predefined goals and plans. Unions represent a group of buildings or a cluster to coordinate shared facilities and utilities (MHUUD, 2009). They work based on a proposed budget for the planned maintenance and improvement activities per year. The share of each apartment in the union is then calculated and collected to complete the union's annual budget. Associations depend on membership fees and donations from members and the private sector. Also, they apply for grants from international and national entities. Cooperatives are resident-centered enterprises whose members own and control it for a shared vision. In these cooperatives, the residents use bank revenues from their start-up capital money to maintain and improve the urban environment in their neighborhoods. Unorganized groups typically begin on social media platforms with names such as coalitions or initiatives. As these groups gain a significant number of online followers, their founders take on the role of communicating the concerns and ideas of the residents to local authorities and implementing them on the ground. We noticed that the unorganized groups have only one or two fixed active members or founders managing the groups' platforms on social media.

We targeted two active members (if available) from each active group. We approached the founders and admins of the active groups on their social media platforms. Four groups from Alzaitoun, Helwan, May 15, and Ain Shams districts did not respond. Furthermore, the admin of a group in Alwaily district mentioned that the group's members are not interested in conducting interviews or discussing their activities due to their frustration with the many challenges they face with local authorities. Eventually, 19 members from 15 active resident groups in nine districts agreed to be interviewed. Based on residents' work occupation status, these active resident groups are from districts that mostly range between high and middle socio-economic levels (see, Abdelbasser A. Mohamed & Stanek, 2021).

We targeted government officials from the same districts as the active groups. By doing so, we included the active members and local officials who interacted with each other and experienced the existing local governance practice at the time of data collection. We interviewed the heads of districts where the 15 active resident groups exist, except for Alnozha district, as we interviewed a delegate. We interviewed 28 individuals: nine officials and 19 active residents in total.

Two separate interview guides were prepared for active members and officials, see Appendix A and B. The questions for the active members investigated the focus of their groups, their activities to improve their neighborhoods, their interactions with authorities, and the challenges they faced and how they dealt with them. The questions

for officials focused on their experience with active resident groups they encountered. We asked about their perception of the roles of these active groups in the urban improvement of the neighborhood, officials' reactions to their activities, officials' responsibilities towards them, and the challenges of interacting with these active groups.

Data collection began in 2019 and continued into 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Active groups were contacted via social media, and local officials were interviewed after obtaining security permits and endorsement letters from Ain Shams University in Cairo and Cairo governorate's office. Respondents were provided with a study description and informed consent form in advance. Most interviews were conducted in person during periods of relaxed COVID-19 measures, with some conducted via telephone or messaging apps. Interviews with local officials lasted 45-60 minutes, and interviews with active members lasted 45-90 minutes. The respondents were anonymized to maintain their privacy and safety. Officials and active members are called official (no.) and member (no.), respectively. Appendix F provides an overview of the active groups and respondents' codes.

6.4.2 Data Processing

The interviews were audio recorded in Arabic except for officials 6 and 7 and members 10, 16, and 19, who did not give permission to be recorded. We transcribed the recorded interviews while we took notes during and immediately after the unrecorded interviews. Data processing included deductive coding based on the theoretical framework in Table 6.1. We extracted and coded excerpts from each interview that described one of the four dimensions of the PAA (i.e., rules, resources, actors, and discourse). After grouping all the excerpts in each dimension, we compared and synthesized them for a deeper understanding of the dimension. By applying this to the four dimensions, we could better understand the current practice of local governance and the main characteristics of active groups' activities in Cairo.

We then analyzed how these dimensions shape local activism in Cairo. To achieve this, we went back to the dimensions' coding in each interview and looked at the wider contexts in which they were mentioned. In these wider contexts, we extracted large excerpts in which respondents mentioned multiple dimensions while explaining and justifying the activities of the active resident groups. These excerpts described interrelations between two or more dimensions. By comparing and synthesizing these excerpts, we deduced how the arrangement of the rules, actors, resources, and discourse dimensions (i.e., the local governance practice in Cairo) incentivizes certain behaviors and discourages other behaviors from the active groups producing the limited local activism found in Cairo.

6.5 The local governance practices in Cairo

This section shows the results of a theoretical framework combining the PAA and the "practice" concept applied to interviews with local officials and active members in Cairo. We start by showing the *rules*, *resources*, *actors*, and *discourse* in Cairo's local governance to understand the components of the current local governance practice. Each of these components is discussed separately for a deeper understanding of the elements of local governance practices.

6.5.1 The rules in Cairo's local governance practice

Respondents' interviews highlighted multiple 'rules' that significantly affect local governance in Cairo. Many of these rules were related to laws, administrative structures, and formal regulations, besides some rules related to informal procedures. We categorized these rules into four; 1) centralized government, 2) strict political control, 3) unmonitored local government, and finally, 4) informal procedures rules.

Centralized government

At the city level, the norm is that national government entities dominate the urban improvement plans for Cairo. However, these plans have recently been under the exclusive control of sovereign bodies affiliated with the military and Egyptian presidency. According to several respondents, this exclusive control is an imposition of unique organizations that cannot be opposed or influenced in their decisions by the rest of the government, let alone the residents.

> The maximum reaction our group could aspire for is that a parliament member picks up our concerns and raises them, but who can stand in the way of "X"[7]? Even with opposing opinions, "X" are the decision makers. They will implement their plans (Member 9).

7 A sovereign entity related to the military

At the district level, district officials have very little, if any, discretionary power. Officials related this issue to centralized budgeting and the affiliation of many departments' directors and technical staff inside district offices to national-level ministries. Initially, district offices set the annual development plan that decides which streets and areas inside the districts are a priority for urban improvement. However, the national government uses this plan only as a reference to determine the governorates' budget. Later, the governorate allocates the budget for each district. Districts' budgets are distributed not only as a total amount but also to specific services and sectors such as paving, street lighting, and salaries.

I work based on a pre-set plan, and the government allocates a budget for that plan. I cannot change it unless I submit an amendment and a report regarding these changes in a lengthy procedure (Official 7)

Despite these centralized rules controlling different aspects of district offices' work, officials highlighted the absence of rules for involving residents in district offices' activities. With the absence of rules to guide local government apparatus in this regard, residents' involvement in local urban affairs becomes prone to what Bongyu (2008) describes as "personal power." It is when one person controls a governmental apparatus. Reflecting on Cairo, district offices' interactions with active residents are dependent on the individual characteristics of the officials in the district offices rather than district offices as local governmental entities with defined and transparent systems.

The interaction between district offices and civil society has no rules concerning the terms of collaboration and types of activities. It is different from one district to another and dependent on the willingness of the district employees to cooperate with active groups (Official 5)

Strict political control

The active members mentioned many political and security constraints on their activities. Some political control exists formally as laws, such as the protest law restricting the right to protest rather than regulating it. Furthermore, civil society law bans the affiliation of active groups' members to political movements and prohibits civil society organizations whose activities are considered political or violate public order by authorities (N. Fahmy, 2015; TIMEP, 2019).

This cooperative was dissolved for some time for political reasons because a board member was from "Y"[8] (Member 17).

Informally, the political control rule exists through directions from security personnel who reach out to active members and instruct them about the content on their platforms and to calm down angry posts.

The security service will monitor any group with more than five thousand subscribers. […] During Parliament elections, a security officer told us not to support a specific candidate […] Because if only one candidate is supported, we become a political group with an agenda (Member 5).

Unmonitored local government

The rule of the unmonitored local government is based on the futility of the mechanisms for monitoring local government performance, whether inside the governmental apparatus or externally by the residents. Regarding performance monitoring by the residents, active members do not know which entities they should communicate with to report violations and monitor district offices' performance effectively. According to several active members, the available channels to report the weak performance of a district office or one of its departments only focus on distributing the complaints to the responsible department without proper follow-up or investigating why these complaints exist and how to avoid their recurrence.

We file a complaint to the "Government Complaints Portal," they forward it to the district office, and you wait for 15 days or more, and then they respond, saying your complaint has been resolved, which is not the case. These portals take the words of the district office without validation (Member 18)

As for performance monitoring inside the district office, officials highlighted that they do not have the administrative authority to directly control and rectify the performance in some specialized departments, such as electricity, water, gas, and street cleanup. They mentioned this lack of administrative authority as a justification for deficiencies in service delivery within the district. As many of the employees inside these departments are affiliated with national-level ministries, they are autonomous from the district's

8 Banned political group

administrative authority to a great extent. As a result, the head of the district can only report performance problems to respective departments at the governorate level.

For example, there is an engineer from the water company in every district responsible for the water supply. We are always in contact with him. We track and report if there is a fracture or leakage. I will ask him to act, but I am not the one holding him accountable. This matter is between him and the Ministry of Housing (Official 7).

Informal practices

The informal practices rule is based on the complexity or absence of formal procedures for the interaction of local authorities with civil society at the district level. The absence of formal procedures leaves a void that local actors fill with informal procedures. For instance, officials and active members use many unofficial communication channels, such as personal messaging on chat apps or unofficial meetings, leading to non-binding agreements.

Some residents offer to improve the area around their houses, and after the district office prepares the site for them, they do nothing. This action bothers me because there are no official documents between us. It was a verbal agreement, so I cannot hold them accountable (Official 6)

The consequences of non-binding agreements resulting from using unofficial channels are something respondents have complained about in the interviews. Despite this, respondents find these channels the alternative to absent formal procedures. As for the active members, these channels assure them that their messages have reached the responsible official, in contrast to the difficulty of meeting officials in person. As for the officials, these channels allow them to follow up on the conditions of the districts from the residents' perspective while saving the time and effort required to organize official meetings with the residents.

There was a district head whom I kept going to his office seven times until he agreed to meet. After him, there was a cooperating official. As for the one who is present, even if I go 4 or 5 times, I will not meet him […] But I currently have five phone numbers of employees such as the district secretary, district cleaning authority, and street lighting, and we work together over the phone (Member 14)

Respondents from the active groups expressed that the existing formal procedures to regulate active resident groups, such as residents' associations, unions, and

cooperatives, are complicated and unrealistic. For instance, establishing unions between several buildings requires the pre-existence of individual unions for each building. This requirement is impractical because many buildings do not have a union. The other alternative is to obtain legal delegation from 25% of the occupants. However, it is challenging to motivate this percentage of occupants to carry out this legal procedure. Some unorganized groups resort to the informal practice of collecting monthly contributions similar to the monthly subscriptions collected from the residents by unions, although they are not official unions. This informal practice makes these contributions variable donations and thus lose being continuous with a specified monthly amount.

Money collection is now a donation, not a subscription, so whoever wants to pay 10 pounds pays, whoever wants to pay five pounds pays, and some do not even answer our door knocks at them (Member 15)

Even if the residents established a union, the laws dealing with residents who do not pay their subscriptions to the union are unrealistic. According to the law, the union's board of directors can impose fines and file court cases against uncommitted residents, which might result in imprisonment at worst. However, union boards are reluctant to carry out these procedures, as the residents and the board of directors do not favor the concept of residents filing lawsuits against each other. Instead, unions resort to the informal practices of persuading and pleading with non-payers. These practices often fail, causing the anger of committed subscribers.

We do not want to get neighbors imprisoned [...] Some residents say I pay, but my neighbor does not. Show me that you can force the neighbor or me to pay (Member 15).

6.5.2 Resources in Cairo's local governance practice

The interviews have revealed a general lack of funds, tools and equipment, and human resources in local governance practices, including the resources of active groups and government bodies. Two primary reasons for this shortage are the insufficient and unevenly distributed public resources and the unstable private resources raised by the active groups. Regarding public resources, the national-level government dedicates an annual budget for each district office for urban maintenance and improvement and divides it into specific service sectors. This pre-set budget is neither enough to cover the proposed maintenance plan nor does it include funds for supporting residents' initiatives. Moreover, district offices cannot

keep the fees or taxes they collect from residents as part of the district budget. With such limited resources, district offices cannot even afford to respond to sudden problems in the district, let alone financially support active groups' initiatives.

A lamppost may fall to the ground suddenly due to a car accident or the weather. As a district officer, I may not have enough budget to replace it and fix the situation (Official 6)

District offices have few available tools, equipment, and workers at their disposal, which do not match the districts' large areas. As a result, district offices cannot properly operate, maintain, and monitor the local services and infrastructure. Despite these limited and pre-set public resources, district offices occasionally send their workers and equipment to help active groups in neighborhood cleanup campaigns.

The private resources depend on active groups' ability to raise funds and recruit active members on the one hand and residents' responsiveness on the other. Several active members complained that very few residents financially support active groups; even if they do, it is not continuous. Active members mentioned some reasons for this weak commitment from residents. These are refusing the self-help approach of local initiatives, the declining economic status of many residents, residents' lack of interest in improving their surroundings, or not trusting active groups enough to support them financially.

If people had money to contribute to their community before, it is impossible now. I cannot go to someone who barely covers their house expenses and ask them for support (Member 12).

Some people do not want to pay, a kind of stinginess or lack of interest, or it makes no difference to them whether the neighborhood is clean (Member 16)

With such challenging conditions for active groups and residents, the private resources of active groups are limited and unstable. Unions suffer from budget deficits almost every month. Association members struggle to cover the monthly rent for their registered address, let alone fund urban improvement activities. Cooperatives often depend on a bank interest tied to a fixed maintenance deposit paid by the owners at the construction of the housing project many years ago. This interest lost its value significantly with inflation. Many active groups cannot raise funds legally due to their informal status.

6.5.3 Actors in Cairo's local governance practice

Governmental actors

We noticed that the activities of governmental actors are often exclusionary as governmental actors dominate the urban policies and city plans in Egypt. This exclusion is not directed at non-governmental actors only but extends to governmental actors at the local level or at the national level but outside the presidency and specific sovereign entities. Such national governmental actors with sovereign power set districts' urban upgrading plans as part of city planning without involving active groups or district offices. Local officials highlight these exclusionary activities as a justification for their limited authority over their districts' large-scale urban development projects.

People have a say here that the head of the district has presidential powers over the district. This is not true at all! In many cases, we only mediate, and we get informed by decisions and major projects that will take place in our district at the same time as the residents (Official 7)

Despite blaming the exclusionary activities of national governmental actors, district officials also practice exclusionary activities. They dominate the annual development plan for the district, which the government uses as a reference for budget allocation. Local officials explained that setting these plans is one of the offices' core activities that their specialized engineers and experts can only carry out. Although officials claim to be the qualified local actor for setting plans, they are neglected in Cairo's upgrading plan. Instead, district offices carry out any required activities to facilitate the implementation of Cairo's top-down plan. Local officials' attitude implies that they do not object to the existence of exclusionary practices in the government. However, instead, they want the residents to realize its existence and deal with local officials on this basis.

The major projects under the auspices of the President take all focus of the office. We must carry out many activities with the protection of the police because these projects simply move people from their place. Some people refuse to leave and attack the district office. […] These relocations are top decisions, but since the project's location is within the district, we are in charge of implementation. We (district offices) are always blamed for such decisions (Official 1).

As the national government controls district offices' resources, treats their annual plans as a mere reference, and excludes them from the city's development plans,

district offices lose being a local body that works in the interest of the residents. Instead, they are local administrative bodies to manage the district in accordance with the political interest of the government.

District offices are led mainly by ex-military and police officers selected by the government and hold rankings such as Major and General. This selected group of officials alternates in the presidency of the different districts. No explanations are announced regarding their selection for a particular district and transfer to another after a short period. With this recruitment mechanism, officials are often unaware of the different neighborhoods in the district and their urban problems. Also, this mechanism does not reward local officials for reaching out to residents as officials' legitimacy comes from the national government, thus reducing officials' motivation to cooperate with active groups.

The government brings officials from other districts or even governorates. By the time he knows the problems of each neighborhood and asks for a budget, he will be moved to another district, and a new official will come (Member 12)

As district offices' interactions with active groups tend to depend on the "personal power" of district officials, one may expect variations in respondents' descriptions of how officials deal with active groups. However, almost all respondents mentioned that local officials interact with active groups only when active members approach the office. Active residents feel that the lack of initiating collaborative activities from local officials proves the government's neglect of active groups.

The district office never approached us at any stage to ask about our problems. Even if they have a campaign (such as cleanup campaigns), they do not say anything, nothing (Member 14)

When officials meet the active group and receive their complaints or initiatives, their personal power defines district offices' response to these complaints. Officials may order to add the complaint site to the priority streets and clusters for regular cleanups and small-scale maintenance works.

Active groups

Most of the active resident groups in Cairo are founded and maintained by very few dedicated members. These active groups have thousands of residents and followers on their social media platforms, creating rich interactions, discussions, and ideas. The discussions are about complaints and problems related to repeatedly occurring forms of urban deterioration. The proposed ideas revolve around possible ways to

fix the existing problems. Despite these rich conversations on the internet, few active groups realize these ideas.

We consider ourselves an individual effort more than a group because, unfortunately, people want solutions to their problems while sitting at home […] We come up with many ideas, but I can tell you that 1% of these ideas are implemented. Society is increasingly lazy, so people send you a problem and wait for you to solve it. They do not participate in realizing the solutions. (Member 3)

These groups' main activity is gathering the reported problems on the platform, communicating them to local officials, and following up on their responses. These reporting activities focus on repairing day-to-day local services and infrastructure. The reports usually occur on public Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups between active members and local officials. Sometimes active members ask Parliament members to mediate and mobilize local officials to respond. However, these communication channels are informal and non-binding. Most of the required repairs are similar in different districts and reoccur in the same places inside each district. Despite this, the active groups keep tackling urban deterioration by reporting these day-to-day repairs without addressing the causes of recurrence.

The district often states that there is no possibility of sending workers. Even if workers appear, they disappear after 3 or 4 days […] So should we repeatedly report the worker's lack of commitment forever! (Member 13).

Besides requesting repairs, a few groups, mostly the organized ones, opt for self-provision-based activities in which they depend on private resources.

We implement comprehensive urban improvements for the deteriorated main squares and streets. These improvements include cleanups, painting and tiling sidewalks, paving streets, and planting trees. Everything is funded by the residents (Member 10)

Active members described the high dependence of their activities on other actors. In the reporting repairs activities, active groups fully depend on district offices' responsiveness and ability to repair, threatening the effectiveness of these activities. The self-provision activities depend entirely on residents' willingness and ability to fund, threatening the continuity of these activities. This reliance on residents intensifies when the active groups continuously commit to providing a service, such as hiring a private security company with fixed monthly payments.

Nothing is in our hands. I mean, we are just a link. We deliver the complaints. Sometimes the official responds, and sometimes not (Member 12)

The people who pay vary from one time to another. […] We simply depend on residents' decency, but what if some are not decent enough? How will we be able to cover the costs of the security project?! (Member 13)

We also noticed the apolitical intention behind the activities of active groups. The activities of requesting repairs or self-providing the needed repairs do not engage with the causes of the urban deterioration in the first place. These activities avoid questioning how decisions are made regarding the urban improvement of the neighborhood or the distribution of public resources. Even when government decisions and plans are issued, and residents are against them in their posted comments, most active members do not translate this opposition into collective actions. We also noticed that active groups consistently deny any political affiliation. This denial appears in the terms and conditions of joining the active group on social media, in how groups describe themselves, criticize neighborhood problems, or comment on the city upgrading projects.

We do not interfere in the district office's activities and planning. […] There are official authorities responsible for the district. Neither you nor I. […] If a resident's goal is to solve a problem, we will report it to officials and try to solve it without attacking the government authorities (Member 5).

Active groups have multiple problematic internal and external relationships. Internally, groups performing self-provision activities have disputes between members and residents due to financial disagreements. From time to time, few residents question the efficiency of the provided service compared to what they pay. Additionally, some residents blame active groups that report repairs for district offices' late response.

Sometimes, residents accuse me of negligence. I am speaking on the resident's behalf, and they attack me! I am an ordinary resident just like them. The only difference is that I use my contacts to help (Member 12).

Some people said we paid in the beginning, and the result was the security project; now, we will not pay until we see another success. Just keeping the security project is a great success […] Under these circumstances, many people do not pay, and we are late paying the security company. So, how do I take another step when I cannot cover the security project! (Member 15)

Externally, active members struggle to open communication channels with local officials, especially when a new local official is appointed. Opening such communication channels is difficult in many cases. Active members might need to use their private network with high-profile personnel and parliament representatives to introduce the active group to local officials.

I tried to include members of the Parliament and the head of the district. There was no communication between the official and the group. I go to the district office, and they send me away. I widened my network with the elite of society. I met with judges and generals living in the neighborhood; they have connections and offer to use them to facilitate our work. Now, I am connected to the Governor and his deputy (Member 18)

6.5.4 The discourse on Cairo's local governance practice

Discourse is the fourth dimension in the PAA, representing the *sayings* in local governance practices. We focused on the respondents' narratives while describing their experiences with the local governance process, reflecting on the challenges they face and their approach toward these challenges. We noticed two main discourses: 1) mistrusting actors and 2) disclaiming responsibility discourses.

"Mistrusting actors" discourse

We noticed that respondents mention each other negatively and with high skepticism resulting in mistrust surrounding active resident groups and district offices in Cairo. Regarding active resident groups, respondents highlighted a prevailing fear that active groups have hidden agendas beyond their declared aims to improve the neighborhoods. There is a doubt, especially among officials, that active groups might have political agendas against the country's perceived interests. This mistrust is an extension of the broader political discourse in Egypt that links the stability of the existing regime with the country's best interest. Thus, attempts by civil society to question the government's urban policies and plans are prone to be accused of working against the country. The officials expressed being cautious when interacting with active groups. Moreover, many active groups' members highlighted that many residents suspect active groups are after financial or political gains. The doubts regarding a hidden financial gain aggregate, mainly once active groups collect money for urban improvement.

I need to filter the good from the bad and whether the criticism is for attacking purposes only. From experience, I have to say there is a constant attack on the state's efforts. You find state projects under criticism while still under construction for personal agendas (Official 8)

People wonder why a resident wants to improve the neighborhood. Young people struggle with this issue because we receive accusations of doing this for elections. There is always this distrusting perception when someone says, "Let's clean the area." There is always a feeling that something is wrong (hidden agenda) (Member 15).

Simultaneously, district offices as local government entities have a bad reputation among active groups, revolving around district offices suspected of being corrupt, lazy, and not applying laws. This bad reputation is linked to corruption cases uncovered over the years, which some active members believe are only the tip of the iceberg of corruption. The laziness accusation is linked to the repetition of the complaints or employees' unresponsiveness.

If I complain that a person commits a violation, they (the district office) do not take action, and if they send someone, he will take his share (a bribe) and does nothing, which is a well-known practice (Member 14).

"Disclaiming responsibility" discourse

We also noticed a discourse of respondents disclaiming responsibilities toward expanding the scope of residents' involvement in local governance. Regarding officials, governance as having multi-actors involved in how districts are governed is not in their perception, as it is the government's responsibility alone. For them, active residents carry out a complementary and commendable activity, but it is an additional activity that the residents are not obligated to. Local officials assume that meeting the active groups that approach district offices is their only responsibility towards such groups. Some even argue that following up on declining active groups or mobilizing residents to establish unions are forms of compelling residents to participate in urban improvement.

Some want (to form unions), and some do not, and we cannot force anyone […] they must start themselves and reach out to us, and we will facilitate. We are not going to chase them! (Official 1)

This discourse appeared in two contexts: first, to explain that the limited existence of active groups is not due to a shortcoming of district offices but because of residents' passivity and weak willingness. Second, when officials responded to whether they see that there are more activities they can do to encourage the presence of more active groups. This discourse relates to local officials' absent proactivity towards the active groups. Literature on effective citizen engagement in local governance suggests that

the role of the governmental actors should go beyond being responsive to initiate, enable and raise awareness regarding citizens' engagement in their communities. These proactive roles appreciate the value of multi-actors involvement in public affairs in what is known as the shift from government to governance (Lo, 2018). Linking this literature with officials' discourse shows that the local authorities' mindset has not shifted to governance in Cairo.

As for the residents, we noticed that many active members participate in local governance due to the government's failure to manage neighborhoods. They attempt to reduce the severity of this failure but avoid being held responsible for improving the neighborhood due to these attempts. Many active members disclaim any additional responsibilities beyond their volunteering and non-binding form of organization and activities. They stress that they only try to help the residents and improve the neighborhood without promises.

I will try to help in the improvement of the neighborhood. If I succeed, this is good, but if not, I cannot be blamed. After all, it is not my responsibility. No one should be angry, have strong expectations, or accuse me of falling short (Member 5)

This section provided a detailed analysis of the elements of local governance practices in Cairo by looking into the PAA's rules, resources, actors, and discourses dimensions separately. Concerning the rules, local governance in Cairo is strongly affected by four types of 'rules': 1) a centralized government, 2) strict political control, 3) unmonitored local government, and finally, 4) informal procedures. Regarding resources, we found a general lack of funds, tools and equipment, and human resources, including the resources of active groups and government bodies. As for the actors, the activities of governmental actors are exclusionary and lack any proactive government activity to engage the residents in the planning, management, or maintenance of neighborhoods. The district offices are local administrative bodies selected and appointed to manage the district following the government's political interest rather than the residents' interest. The active resident groups intend to focus on apolitical activities such as requesting repairs or self-providing the needed repairs without engaging with the causes of the urban deterioration in the first place. These activities also depend highly on residents' financial support and local officials' permission and responsiveness. Finally, respondents' descriptions of their experiences with local governance in Cairo were loaded with mutual mistrust and disclaiming responsibilities toward residents' involvement in local governance.

6.6 How local governance practices affect local activism

This section analyses the links between the PAA's rules, resources, actors, and discourses dimensions and how these links affect local activism in Cairo. We found a link between *rules*, *resources*, and the exclusionary activities of governmental actors in respondents' descriptions of the dependent nature of local activism. As shown in Figure 6.1, the rules allocate all the local governing responsibilities and all the local public resources to governmental actors. These rules create a hierarchical organizational structure that puts governmental actors above the active groups in the local governance practice while depriving these groups of any shared control over or benefits from the public funds. With these concentrated responsibilities and public resources, local officials perceive that controlling the yearly maintenance plans and strictly executing them is essential to following the rules and protecting public resources. As for the active groups, they are left with whatever unstable resources they can raise from low-income residents. The instability of these resources is significant, especially when informal practices rule the interactions between actors in Cairo.

This arrangement of rules and resources encourages local governmental actors to exclude the residents from the yearly maintenance plan for the district. District officials know that residents' involvement is neither a requirement of how they perform their duties nor a formal part of their job responsibilities. They recognize that the pre-set public resources constrain them from adequately managing services and supporting active groups' initiatives. Furthermore, they are aware of the unstable private resources of active groups. As a result, local officials do not perceive a tangible benefit from involving the residents in the annual plan and taking the trouble to reconcile the different opinions of the residents. They perceive this arrangement as a determinant of their interactions with active groups.

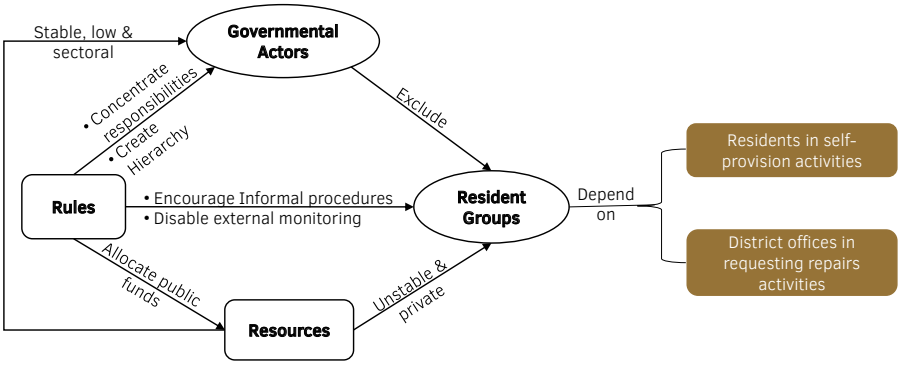

FIG. 6.1 The link between rules, resources, the exclusionary activities of governmental actors, and the dependent nature of local activism in Cairo. Source: Authors

The truth is that all streets need maintenance, but the budget is limited and does not allow paving more than 3 or 4 streets [...] If I decide to improve Street 5, residents will say, why Street 5? Where are streets 6, 10, and 8? I mean, you can never please everyone. Therefore, whatever I see as a priority area for improvement, I choose it immediately (Official 6)

Many initiatives need financial support essentially. Some may want to paint (sidewalks and walls) themselves, but they want materials. District Office cannot provide them with these materials [...] If the office itself needs materials, I do not have the budget for them. I cannot help these initiatives (Official 2)

According to Leeuwen (2010), governance arrangements resulting in uneven distribution of resources and responsibilities negate the interdependency between actors and create the dependency of other actors on one actor. We found such influence highly concentrated in active groups' activities. Active groups neither have stable private resources to fix the needed repairs themselves nor effective channels to pressure district offices and hold them accountable for these repairs. Thus, local activism based on reporting repairs is almost entirely dependent on the response of district offices.

I have nothing else but to insist. I went to the district office seven times for the garbage problem (Member 13)

Regarding local activism based on self-provision, one may expect these activities to be more independent and autonomous. However, this is not the case in Cairo, as such activities moved from being dependent on district offices to residents. The self-

provision activities aimed to be independent of district offices' poor resources and unmonitored performance. However, these activities became dependent entirely on residents' willingness and ability to fund them.

> We said the office does not have a sufficient budget and will not support us. We decided to depend on ourselves […] However, nothing compels the residents to pay and commit other than being convinced of the importance of the idea […] Refusing to pay will end the security service, which means the area will become unsafe and chaotic (Member 13).

We found a strong relationship between the mistrusted actors' discourse and the arrangement of rules and resources, which respondents mentioned while describing the apolitical nature of local activism. As shown in Figure 6.2, respondents often connected this discourse with the rules of political control and unmonitored local government. The link with the political control rule revolves around how this rule demonizes civil society by portraying it as a potential threat to society and the regime. It also demonizes public gatherings as the gateway to spreading chaos and destabilizing public security. Thus, it feeds the mistrust of active groups and any calls for public gatherings. As for the rule of unmonitored local government, it feeds the mistrust of district offices as there are neither proper internal performance monitoring nor channels for an external one. In a way, criticizing the government's top-down plans and reporting its poor performance seems to be a risk that exposes the active groups to reprisal consequences and will not rectify the situation.

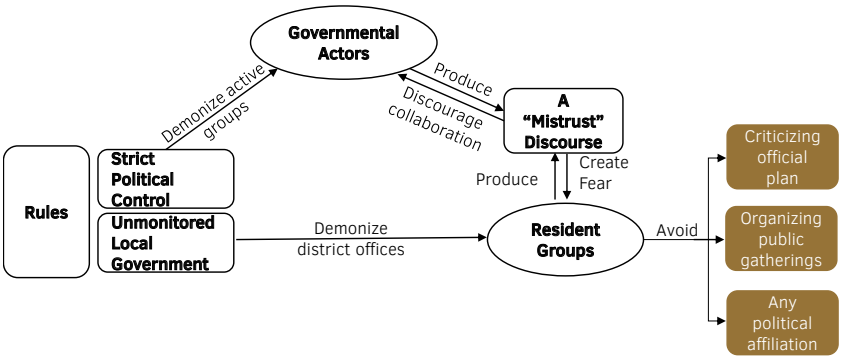

FIG. 6.2 The link between rules, the "mistrust" discourse, and the apolitical nature of local activism in Cairo. Source: Authors

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This rules-originated discourse discourages local activism that exposes corruption or failure of the government's urban plans for fear of accusations related to spreading mistrust in the government. As a result, the active groups choose their activities carefully while following the political control rule, counteracting the bad reputation of civil society and without relying much on external monitoring. This arrangement encourages local actors to believe that the only way to practice local activism is to avoid any politically related activities. The active groups avoid strongly criticizing the national government's plan for the city and neighborhoods.

We will not change the universe; if we cross the limits and criticize the regime, we will end up in a state security service facility. That is why we are careful that anything (posts) related to politics is removed, and we have nothing to do with it (Member 14).

Even public gatherings to discuss ideas for improving the neighborhood are avoided. One may assume that such gatherings are apolitical and that active groups are overly fearful. However, these fears become justified with news of security services arresting apolitical calls for public gatherings in Cairo (Brown, 2022). Active groups' fear goes beyond the purpose of the gathering to fear of receiving punishment for reviving public gatherings in the first place. Instead, active groups resort to discussions on social media and smartphone apps. By taking these precautions, the groups protect themselves from any political classification that may expose them to accusations such as instigating revolt, disturbing social peace, and working against the government. Despite all these precautions, these apolitical activities are prone to be considered by local officials as political acts.

Keep in mind that there is fear. Fear is an essential factor for anyone trying to do anything […] Indeed, the initiatives from residents are far from politics in their agendas. But their political aspect is the idea of group gatherings, which is the problem. If people are not afraid of gatherings, many activities will exist (Member 11)

Respondents mentioned another strong relationship between the mistrusted actors' discourse and resources while describing the lack of self-provision in local activism. As shown in Figure 6.3, the mistrust related to active groups collecting money for personal gains discourages them from initiating self-provision activities.

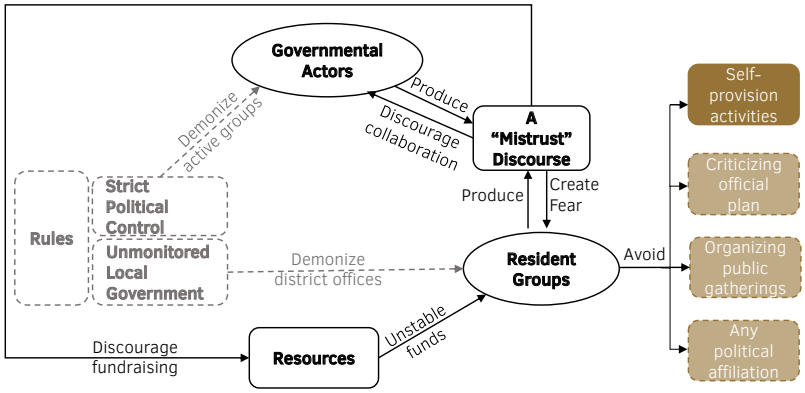

FIG. 6.3 The link between resources, the "mistrust" discourse, and the lack of self-provision local activism in Cairo. Source: Authors

The active groups avoid raising funds from the residents to avoid provoking this mistrust. They notice how prone the self-provision activities of the other few active groups are to residents' mistrust and accusations. Consequently, the resources of these groups are constantly changing, which hinders them from committing to providing continuous service or urban improvement. Based on this, many active members perceive no benefit from challenging this discourse and committing to self-provision activities.

I do not allow anyone to question my motivations. I do not risk people questioning why I collect money and whether I take a fee in return. So, I work voluntarily. I do not involve in activities with money. I do not want my work to be stained with any impurities (Member 1)

We found links between the disclaiming responsibility discourse and the arrangement of rules and resources, which respondents mentioned while describing the focus of local activism on fixing day-to-day services. As shown in Figure 6.4, the rules in Cairo do not require residents' involvement in urban improvement plans, prohibit residents from protesting how neighborhoods are governed, disable external performance monitoring, and encourage informal and non-binding practices. Public resources are centralized in governmental actors' hands, while the private resources for active groups are unstable. These rules and resources encourage local officials to disclaim their responsibility to invite residents to activities or encourage them to self-organize.

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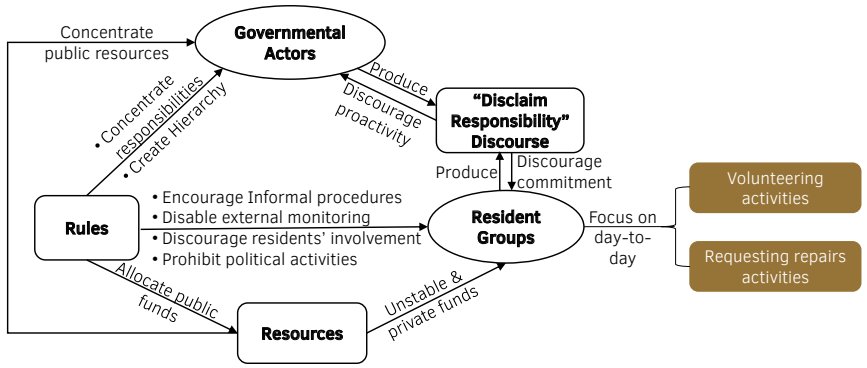

FIG. 6.4 The link between rules, resources, the "disclaiming responsibility" discourse, and the focus of local activism on fixing day-to-day services in Cairo. Source: Authors

With this arrangement, if residents actively choose to involve in local governance, they need to balance between overcoming political control, dealing with complex procedures, surviving financially, and negotiating with different actors.

The problem of civil society is the lack of support. To whom can I resort? Local government! It is unreliable. Also, sometimes the repairs needed are beyond our capabilities, like street pavement. As a civil society, I will not be able to do this because I do not have any power or sources of income (Member 12)

This challenging act of balance feeds the discourse of many groups disclaiming official responsibility for improving the neighborhood. Most active groups are encouraged to focus on any urban deterioration in the neighborhood that can be achieved with minimal effort and with minor possible legal and social responsibilities. This focus is crucial to the much-needed balance between self-organizing and getting urban improvements done versus becoming too visible and accountable in Cairo's local governance arrangement. The minimal effort is achieved through activities that look after residents' day-to-day complaints about repairs and report them to district offices. The minor legal or social responsibility is achieved through basing the active groups' activities on volunteering, whose continuity is day-to-day decided without holding an official responsibility towards the neighborhood or the residents.

We have one consistent goal: to help people with our connections. This goal is achieved with relative percentages. It is possible in an issue that I achieve 100%, in another 30%, and there are issues that I cannot achieve anything at all. I do not take responsibility for anything or get a fee in return [...] Sincerely, I am doing as much as I can to the best of my ability, but we all have our own work and life (Member 5)

6.7 Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the influence of local governance practices on local activism in a politically challenging context. We used a case study methodology, including interviews with local officials and active residents in Cairo. Using a theoretical framework combining the PAA and the "practice" concept, we first studied the *rules*, *resources*, *actors*, and *discourse* in Cairo's local governance. These four dimensions reflect the local governance practice with its doings, sayings, and things. The results showed that Cairo's local governance practice consists of; 1) poor and unevenly distributed resources, 2) exclusionary activities from the government, 3) rules that repress residents' engagement and limit district offices to an administrative role, and 4) a discourse loaded with mistrust and responsibilities disclaim. We then analyzed how these elements are linked to find that Cairo's local governance practice lacks any proactive government activity to engage the residents in the planning, management, or maintenance of neighborhoods. It prevents residents from protesting the results of these processes or exercising performance monitoring over them. Even if the residents want to improve the neighborhood on their own, Cairo's local governance practice disables them.

With these constraints, Cairo's local governance practice produces a dependent and sensitive apolitical local activism. It permits apolitical local activism that focuses on fixing the urban deterioration without approaching the local governance arrangements causing it. The permitted apolitical local activism takes two forms. First, active residents self-provide local services maintenance. Second, active residents detect the needed repairs in the neighborhoods and report them to the district office. Both forms of apolitical local activism highly depend on other actors in the economically struggling and mistrusting context of Cairo. They only exist when active groups are sensitive to achieving any self-organized urban improvement without raising the attention of authorities too much or being held accountable for overly promising the residents. These forms of activism rarely involve activities to stop the imposed urban plans or force modifying the local government apparatus itself. Although many active groups perceive these forms of apolitical local activism insufficient, they hold on to them as the safest way, fearing possible serious consequences. Even with such an apolitical focus and a sensitive manner, these forms of local activism are prone to be considered by local officials as political acts.

This study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it expands our knowledge regarding local activism in politically challenging contexts. The few studies on the Global South focus on "insurgent citizenship" (Holston, 2008; Lemanski, 2019; Miraftab, 2009). It takes place in contexts where the involvement of active residents

is not supported by the state yet allows for resistant and confrontational tactics by citizens to improve the conditions of their urban neighborhoods. By focusing on parts of the Global South where activism is not enabled and may even be actively disabled, this study uncovers a different form of local activism. In such circumstances, local activism is dependent, service-maintenance focused, and sensitively apolitical, where active residents can improve their neighborhoods without endangering themselves.

Second, this study expands our knowledge regarding local activism in Cairo, where the relationship between the active groups and local authorities shaping local activism is rarely analyzed. It highlights exclusionary activities from the government and apolitical activities from active groups resembling the findings of Singerman (1995) on participation in low socio-economic neighborhoods in Cairo. In our study, these characteristics are found to extend to middle and higher- class neighborhoods, challenging the notion that the residents of these neighborhoods are, to some extent, immune to government exclusion. Regarding the exclusionary activities from the government, our findings have shown how the control of planning and urban improvement in Cairo by sovereign authorities has resulted in negative urban transformation and a lack of influence by active groups of these upper-class neighborhoods on decision-making circles. As for the apolitical activities of active groups, our findings show how the regime's security restrictions and repressive practices have become a major determinant of many active groups. They tend to depoliticize their activities, their announced goals, their posts on social media, or even when attempting to criticize the government's urban management and planning for the city.

Third, this study maps the complex settings of Cairo to a theoretical framework. The framework identifies the influence of the local governance practice on local activism and links this influence to the elements of local governance practices using PAA and the "practice" concept. With this framework, we have learned about a link between the rules, resources, and government actors shaping the highly dependent local activism. It showed two links between rules, resources, and discourse. One that discourages activism protesting government and encourages apolitical one instead. The other link encourages activism focused on fixing minor neighborhood repairs. Finally, we have learned about a link between resources and discourse that discourages sustained self-provision activism. These elements and links represent a map to trace the sources of this influence in the rules, resources, actors, and discourses found in the context of Cairo. By tracing these sources, researchers and decision-makers can identify possible interventions in the current temporary arrangement of local governance practice to improve local activism. These interventions would form a new temporal arrangement for the practice of local governance that could shape local activism based on balanced power relations between the active residents and authorities and more engagement of residents in planning and management decisions in their neighborhoods.

For example, researchers and decision-makers may focus on incentivizing local activism that is more immersed in monitoring the planning and management decisions in the neighborhood and participating in making them. To achieve this, they need to pay attention to the discourse of mistrust in government actors that deters active residents from monitoring government actors' performance. Putnam (2021) explained that trust in the government is just a thermometer for the government's performance, so when the reading of this thermometer is high (the mistrust discourse in our case), the focus should not be on asking actors to change their discourse. Instead, the focus should be on what causes this discourse in the performance and structure of local government. These causes appeared in our analysis, where the respondents linked the mistrusting discourse with the unmonitored local government and the political control rules in Cairo. Therefore, incentivizing local activism in Cairo requires intervening in these two rules and measuring the success of the intervention by the extent to which the discourse of mistrust decreases.

In fact, the *rules* element repeatedly appeared as a root cause of the influence of Cairo's local governance on producing limited and dependent activism (see the four links). These rules are put in place by authorities in Egypt to only allow a narrow space for residents to intervene in urban governance without destabilizing the existing local governance arrangements. Although the results show the need to address the rules element in Cairo's local governance practice, we claim that addressing the rules is unlikely to occur soon in the current political environment. In conclusion, in politically challenging contexts like Cairo, rules act as barriers with minimal opportunities for activism.

Intervening in the current arrangements of local governance practice requires the willingness of the key actors and the initiative of at least one of them. This proactive role may begin with local officials inviting active residents to the annual plan meetings for the districts or inviting residents to establish unions and facilitate their registration. It may also begin with a collective grassroots movement adopting the right of citizens to decide for their neighborhoods' planning and management in a way that leads to changing the centralized government rules and the imbalanced distribution of resources. It may even begin with a political initiative from the regime to share the power of planning, distributing resources, selecting officials, and monitoring local government with residents. Future research may investigate with the local actors which interventions can be mobilized for a gradual change in the practice of local governance that the political system of Egypt can allow, and that actor(s) can accept to initiate.

7 Conclusions and Reflections on Local Activism in Cairo's Politically Challenging Context

7.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to further the understanding of local activism in politically difficult contexts, focusing on Cairo city. Such political contexts are characterized by authoritarian regimes hostile to political activism and lacking fundamental civil rights protections, freedom of speech, and independent institutions. Despite these constraints, resident groups in these contexts actively strive for tangible improvements in their urban areas through governance mechanisms that are indifferent or intolerant to citizen participation. Cairo city is an exemplary but under-researched case of local activism in a politically challenging context. As a metropolitan city governed by an authoritarian regime, its political and cultural history discourages citizens from participating in urban governance. Furthermore, there are little, if any, established channels for residents to become involved in their neighborhood's governance.

An underlying problem regarding politically challenging contexts is the shortage of research on local activism. This shortage is noticeable in comparison to research on contexts that encourage local activism or at least allow their citizens to demand their right to the city. As for Cairo itself, there are few studies on individual cases or focus on initiatives led by urban academics and practitioners. However, no current knowledge about active resident groups exists. Consequently, there is a limited understanding of the local activism of ordinary residents who collectively attempt to improve their neighborhoods and have earned local recognition through their work. To address these problems, the main research aim of this thesis is to better understand local activism in the politically challenging context of Cairo. The thesis set out to have four objectives to achieve this research. They are:

1 To identify the variations between the existing literature on active citizens in neighborhood governance and the observed local activism in politically challenging contexts, including Cairo.
2 To explore *what* aims, strategies, and state–citizen interactions local activism in Cairo reveals.
3 To unravel *how*, exactly, local activism features in Cairo's local governance process.
4 To understand *why* local activism in Cairo exists in a particular manner and features in specific roles in local governance processes.

This thesis employs a qualitative research methodology where each objective has its own theoretical framework. The research objectives are guided by one of the three exploratory questions (what, how, and why) and informed by previous objectives' findings, reflections, and experiences. Some of the empirical data was obtained from local newspapers and reports from Google searches. Additionally, Facebook was a crucial platform for collecting information on and connecting with active resident groups in Cairo. The study observed 18 active resident groups in formal areas whose goals and activities involve improving their neighborhoods' urban conditions. The activities of these groups were analyzed using photos, screenshots, and videos found on their Facebook platforms. To further understand local activism in Cairo, the perspectives of both local officials and members of the resident groups were investigated using semi-structured interviews. In the interviews between 2019 and 2020, 19 members from 15 of these 18 active resident groups in nine districts agreed to be interviewed. In addition, nine heads of district offices, or their delegates, from these districts were also interviewed.

The remainder of this chapter first summarizes the key findings of each chapter. Second, a reflection on the research is presented. Third, the limitations of this study are highlighted. Finally, the last section outlines future directions for research.

7.2 Summary of the research results

This thesis comprises a city profile chapter, a theoretical chapter, and three empirical chapters. The theoretical and first empirical chapters have been published as papers in peer-reviewed journals; the second empirical chapter is under review at the time of the writing of this final chapter. The third empirical chapter is being prepared for journal submission. The main findings from these chapters are summarized below.

7.2.1 The urban, governance, and civil society conditions in Cairo's main agglomeration

Chapter 2 served as a city profile introducing Cairo's urban context. The main agglomeration is the home of 95% of Cairo's population. Therefore, we focused on its urban, governance, and civil society conditions. These conditions were discussed and linked to the Egyptian political and economic context. The chapter started by highlighting the rapid urbanization and urban deterioration of the neighborhoods as the main urban problems in the city. We further discussed the top-down urban planning and governance approach, prioritization of building new urban communities, and the lack of public participation as the reasons behind the continuous proliferation of these urban problems. With these challenging urban governance conditions, neither the central government seem interested in improving the quality of life in Cairo's main agglomeration, nor does the local government have the independence and financial capacity to improve the neighborhoods.

The chapter then moved to discuss the restricted condition of civil society, reflecting on the absence of the aspect of "multiple actors" involvement in urban governance in Cairo. Such restricted civil society manifests itself in the absence of elected bodies on the local level, financial, procedural, and legal challenges facing civil society organizations and the blocked public sphere with a combination of civil society law, protest law, and press and information regulation law.

Finally, the chapter sheds light on the emergence of ordinary residents in Cairo coming together and forming active resident groups in their areas, especially after the 2011 revolution's resultant sense of active citizenship. Despite the disappearance of many groups due to the repressive practices of the post-2011 regimes, more groups formed in response to the urban deterioration that negatively affected residents' everyday lives. We discuss the lack of knowledge

regarding these resident groups. Thus, the chapter ended with setting out the focus of the coming chapters on better understanding how these active resident groups function and interact with local authorities and the reasons behind their adopted strategies and tactics.

7.2.2 The distinction between observed local activism in politically challenging contexts and the existing literature on active citizens in neighborhood governance

Chapter 3 is a theoretical paper[9] that started with the premise that local activism is dependent on its context's political and governance structures and is, therefore, different in the Global North and the Global South. Furthermore, it argued that the relatively small body of literature addressing active resident groups in the Global South might not sufficiently inform us about local activism observed in the different parts of the Global South, including Cairo. The paper aimed to better understand the applicability of the dominant Global North perspectives and experiences to local activism in Global South realities. The paper first reviewed the literature on the context and manifestation of local activism in parts of the Global South and North-Western contexts. Next, the characteristics of active resident groups from formal neighborhoods in the cities of Cairo and Johannesburg were confronted with characteristics in the leading North-Western literature. Their characteristics were also discussed in relation to the "insurgent citizenship" and "quiet encroachment" practices of poor and marginalized residents that dominate the Global South literature on local activism. Through this confrontation, the paper deduced the commonalities and differences in dimensions of local activism in the two contexts.

Regarding the confrontation with the Northwestern literature, the analyzed examples suggested a need-based activity instead of the depicted centrality of the right-based dimension in practicing local activism in the literature. Additionally, the analyzed groups were found to interchange between cooperating with the state and working in isolation while intervening in their neighborhood. This interchange differs from the prevalent belief in the state–citizen collaboration as a main path for practicing effective local activism. As such, the Northwestern literature is invaluable in guiding and contributing to the improvement of local activism in contexts where

9 Elwageeh, A., van Ham, M., & Kleinhans, R. (2020). Active citizenship and neighborhood governance; North-Western literature and Global South realities. Sociology and Anthropology, 8(2), 36–48. https://doi.org/10.13189/sa.2020.080202

the centrality of right-based and state–citizen collaboration considerations are recognized. However, in parts of the Global South where local activism is central to need-based considerations and state–citizen collaboration is selective, the main North-western literature can be very limited in understanding local activism.

Concerning the "quiet encroachment" and "insurgent citizenship" concepts dominating the Global South literature, we observed that our examples shared characteristics with these concepts but also differed in other ways. Quiet encroachment refers to a discreet and non-confrontational form of activism. It involves direct actions from residents to meet their basic needs individually without raising authorities' attention until their activities become a reality. Insurgent citizenship describes collective, rights-based resistive activities undertaken by self-organized groups. Confrontations with authorities are part of achieving their goals of challenging the status quo and reaching a larger societal change. The examples from the literature shared the unconfrontational characteristic found in "quiet encroachment." However, they differ in being collective and aiming for their neighborhood's public good. The analyzed examples are collective and self-organized as the insurgent citizenship but differ in avoiding confrontational activities. Moreover, insurgent citizenship involves a shift in the residents' awareness from advocating their demands as "needs" to "rights." This shift cannot describe the analyzed groups.

The chapter concluded with a variation in the centrality of "right-based versus need-based" and "state–citizen collaboration versus selective state–citizen collaboration" dimensions in local activism in both worlds. These variations firstly emphasize the need to improve our understanding of how local communities organize themselves in Global South contexts beyond North-western perspectives and experiences dominating the literature. Secondly, they suggest the presence of a broader range of local activism in the Global South beyond insurgent citizenship and quiet encroachment, emphasizing the need for further exploration of local activism in politically challenging contexts. Finally, they inform scholars of possible starting points for further empirical research. As such, we have adopted these variations as foundations for further in-depth investigation of local activism in Cairo's politically challenging context.

7.2.3 Exploring the aims, strategies, and state–citizen interactions of local activism in Cairo

Chapter 4 is an empirical paper [10] that explores the characteristics of local activism in Cairo. This paper aims to better understand how local activism manifests in the politically problematic context of Cairo and its neighborhoods. In Cairo, active residents use social media to share concerns, mobilize each other, and act on the ground. Being ruled by an authoritarian regime, these active groups are likely to differ from local activism practices in contexts where a culture of citizen engagement is state-supported or at least allowed.

Building on the variations of "rights-based practices" and "interaction with local authorities" suggested in the previous paper, a theoretical framework was developed to further explore these elements in Cairo. For local activism as a rights-based practice, we deduced the ability of the active groups to articulate their needs in the form of rights as a dimension. For local activism as a practice in interaction with authorities, we deduced the dimensions of official recognition by authorities, collaboration with authorities, and confrontation with authorities. For each dimension, we defined the determinants that facilitate its analysis. This framework is adopted to analyze the online published aims, strategies, and state–citizen interactions of 18 active resident groups in Cairo.

To overcome the absence of data and public records regarding these active groups in Cairo, we capitalized on the significant use of Facebook by Egyptians to identify active resident groups and observe their shared activities and stated aims on Facebook. The data included group descriptions, published posts, photos, and videos. We subsequently used the framework to analyze the active resident groups' level of formality, confrontational attitude, collaboration with local officials, and motives.

Without interviewing members of these groups, our observations were not definitive of whether the active groups considered their active role in improving neighborhoods as a right. However, our findings suggest that many active groups practice local activism in the form of a right. However, this right mostly results from the need for a certain urban quality of services. It rarely extends to the residents' right to decide on neighborhood urban improvement and policies. As for active residents' interaction

10 Elwageeh, A., Kleinhans, R., & van Ham, M. (2023). Exploring local activism in the neighborhoods of Cairo. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *45*(3), 546–569. https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2022.2125400

with the local authorities, we found these interactions selective, ambivalent, and unstable. We found unorganized active groups tending to work under the radar by being informal and disconnected from local authorities and avoiding clashes with them. At the same time, other groups want to benefit from and cooperate with the district offices' resources and therefore choose to become formal. The observed groups formed three main clusters. They were either organized self-provisioning groups that confront and ultimately cooperate with local officials, unorganized advocacy groups that demand accountability and action from local officials less confrontationally, or unorganized user groups that settle for online criticism only.

These findings inform the wider debate on the characteristics of local activism in the politically challenging context of Cairo but also raise questions regarding how this local activism is contributing to and affected by the local governance process and arrangements in Cairo. The following chapters go beyond observations and investigate the real-life perspectives and experiences of active residents and local authorities regarding these questions.

7.2.4 Unraveling the roles of active residents in Cairo's local governance process

Chapter 5 is an empirical paper [11] that aims to understand active residents' roles in neighborhood governance processes and *how* these roles unfold in Cairo. The chapter started by emphasizing that few previous studies highlighted limited local activism in Cairo. Such studies suggested that activism in Cairo improves the urban conditions of the neighborhoods in an unconfrontational, selective, and service-centered manner. However, a knowledge gap exists regarding how this limited local activism affects the neighborhood governance processes in the challenging context of Cairo. This chapter explored how this limited activism features in the local governance process in different neighborhoods.

We developed a theoretical framework describing the possible roles of active residents and the representation of these roles in the neighborhood governance process. The framework included the roles of user, self-provider, advocate, and maker, as well as their representations in the formulation, implementation, and

11 Elwageeh, A., Van Ham, M., & Kleinhans, R. (2023). Unraveling the roles of active residents in a politically challenging context: An Exploration in Cairo. *Conditionally Accepted*, International Journal of Urban and Regional Research.

management dimensions of neighborhood governance. This framework was applied to interviews with 19 active residents from 15 active resident groups in nine districts and the heads of the district office of these districts. The theoretical framework helped explore the various roles of active residents in Cairo. However, it did not force the uncovered activities of residents to fit perfectly into just one of the four main roles. In fact, active residents can have several roles at the same time.

Empirically, the analysis reveals (1) the absence of the "maker" role; (2) the existence of "advocate," "user," and "self-provider" roles in limited dimensions of governance; and (3) the strong emergence of a "fixer" role in the management dimension. Conceptually, the results showed the necessity to extend the framework with a fifth role, the "fixer." These results suggest that Cairo's challenging context not only partially limits specific roles but also leads to commonalities in existing roles as the active groups cope with the context. The space for active residents to influence neighborhood governance is limited mostly to *implementation* and *management*. The active residents have no influential role in policy *formulation*, as most participants begin to mention any role for active residents only after decisions are made, policies are defined, budgets are allocated, and officials set development plans. Even the few mentions of a "user" role described indirect, isolated, and imbalanced interactions between local actors that were barely considered a role in policy formulation.

These findings show that the possible space for active residents to exist and impact neighborhood governance is limited to the implementation and management dimensions. They can only act as "fixers" which restore existing services or as struggling and intermittent "self-provider." They suggest that active resident groups only temporarily improve service quality in the short term. However, in the long term, they carry the risk of stabilizing the same defective local governance regime and the resultant deterioration in urban quality.

This chapter provided a structured and zoomed-out view of the roles active residents play in Cairo. It covered active groups from multiple districts with different organizational types and found commonalities in how local activism features among them. In the next chapter, we focus on tracing the identified roles and investigating *why* they exist in this manner to identify the challenges and constraints in current local governance arrangements.

7.2.5 The Influence of Local Governance Practices on Shaping Local Activism in Cairo

Chapter 6 empirically explains *why* the characteristics and roles found in the previous chapters regarding local activism in Cairo exist. The chapter argued that previous studies explained aspects of limited local activism in Cairo's politically challenging context. However, we do not properly understand why exactly these limited and service quality-oriented forms exist. We suggested that filling this gap necessitates a better understanding of the local governance practices in Cairo and their constraints on local activism. Such understanding is crucial in challenging contexts where the political environment creates local governance practices that alienate local actors from activism.

A theoretical framework combining the "Policy Arrangement Approach" (PAA) (Arts et al., 2000) and the "practice" concept (Arts et al., 2013) was developed to identify the arrangements shaping local governance practices and their effects on active residents. The framework was applied in two stages to the same qualitative data set used in the previous chapter. In the first stage, it examined the rules, resources, actors, and discourse related to local governance on the scale of neighborhoods with previously identified roles and characteristics of local activism. The second stage analyzed the interrelations between these rules, resources, actors, and discourse to uncover their effect on local activism.

The results showed that Cairo's local governance practices consist of; 1) poor and unevenly distributed resources, 2) exclusionary activities from the government, 3) rules that repress residents' engagement and limit district offices to an administrative role, and 4) a discourse loaded with mistrust and responsibilities disclaim. We then analyzed how these elements are linked and found four main links. We learned about a link between the rules, resources, and government actors shaping the highly dependent local activism. Additionally, the analysis showed two links between rules, resources, and discourse. One that discourages activism protesting government and encourages apolitical activism instead. The other link encourages activism focused on fixing minor neighborhood repairs. Finally, we learned about a link between resources and discourse that discourages sustained self-provision activism. In these four links, the *rules* element repeatedly appeared as a root cause of the influence of Cairo's local governance on producing limited and dependent activism.

With these governance arrangements, Cairo's local governance practice produces a dependent and sensitive apolitical local activism. It focuses on fixing the urban deterioration without fundamentally changing the local governance arrangements causing it. Such activism depends highly on governmental entities or the residents, which is particularly challenging in an economically struggling and mistrusting

context such as Cairo. Such activism exists when active groups can sensitively manage their high motivation to achieve any self-organized urban improvement without raising the attention of authorities too much or being held accountable for overly promising the residents. This apolitical activism rarely involves activities to stop imposed urban plans or force modifying the local government apparatus itself. Although many active groups perceive this apolitical local activism insufficient, they hold on to it as the safest and most attainable path to improve their neighborhoods.

7.3 Reflection on the research outcomes

This thesis aimed to better understand local activism in Cairo's politically challenging context. With this aim, the research has theoretical contributions on the scale of our general knowledge about local activism in a politically challenging context and on the scale of Cairo specifically. Additionally, the research has a societal contribution as it provides in-depth knowledge of local activism in Cairo, which is crucial for any scholars, decision-makers, and local actors interested in advancing the practice of local activism in Cairo. Finally, the research developed theoretical frameworks and adapted well-known ones, which methodologically contribute to the theoretical frameworks researchers can use to analyze local activism in complex settings. The following subsections discuss these contributions in detail.

7.3.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Contributions

This study's theoretical and conceptual contributions are on two scales: 1) on the scale of our general knowledge about local activism in politically challenging contexts and 2) on the scale of our knowledge regarding local activism in Cairo.

On the scale of local activism in politically challenging contexts

There has been relatively little research on local activism in politically challenging contexts compared to contexts that enable local activism or at least allow their citizens to demand their right to the city. This study concludes that local activism in Cairo differs from the concepts and context assumptions dominating North-Western

and Global South literature on residents' activism in neighborhood governance. We found that state–citizen collaborations are not central to local activism in Cairo. Sometimes, local activism is practiced in isolation. In many cases, a one-sided dependent relationship exists (from the side of the active residents). These state–citizen interactions differ from the prevalent belief in the centrality of connected, coordinated, and responsive state–citizen interactions for practicing effective local activism in the North-western literature (Chaskin & Garg, 1997). Similarly, local activism in Cairo is apolitical in the sense that active groups rarely base their aims and choice of activities and strategies on citizens' right to exercise, claim and defend the co-creation and co-governance of their cities. In fact, the non-centrality of rights-based motivations contradicts the belief that residents count on activism as a basic right (see, for example, Murray et al., 2010) to articulate their aims and choose their means and activities. Despite their leading role in urban studies theorization, these findings align with and strengthen the existing arguments regarding the limited applicability of the North-western perspective and experiences in explaining urban issues in non-western contexts (Mabin, 2014; Watson, 2012).

The arguments recognizing the range of residents' activism in urban planning and governance to widen the urban studies' body of knowledge are not recent (Miraftab, 2012). In the last two decades, many scholars have focused on studying local activism practices in multiple contexts in the Global South and beyond the North-western context (Parnell & Oldfield, 2014; Watson, 2016). These studies have emphasized the concept of "insurgent citizenship" (Holston, 2008; Miraftab & Wills, 2005) that dominantly describes activism in the Global South and the concept of "quiet encroachment" (Bayat, 2000) as a form of activism highlighted in the Middle East. In quiet encroachment, the residents individually and unconfrontationally encroach lands and extend informal connections to water and electricity lines without raising the attention of officials until their activities become a reality. In insurgent citizenship, residents collectively demand their rights in the city using sanctioned, and unsanctioned strategies in which clashing with the authorities is part of achieving their goals. While some of the features and activities in these two concepts were similar to our observations on local activism in politically challenging contexts, others were not (see Chapter 3). With our study, it was crucial to start by investigating local activism in Cairo besides and beyond insurgent citizenship and quiet encroachment concepts.

After studying local activism in Cairo, we argue that even the few features partially in line with insurgent citizenship or quiet encroachment exist for different reasons and are achieved by very different strategies and tactics. For instance, residents' activities in Cairo and quiet encroachment are similar in not seeking to clash with the authorities. Residents avoid clashing with the authorities in quiet

encroachment by the tactic of moving individually and discreetly while encroaching lands and informally extending infrastructure connections. The reason behind avoiding authorities is that each resident does not want to raise the attention of the authorities to their informal encroachment and thus avoid any confrontations and possible authorities' reprisal reactions. However, in Cairo, when residents are collectively active, they avoid clashing with the authorities by the tactic of denouncing any political tendencies in their goals, means of expression, and activities. Their strategies sensitively fix the urban deterioration without addressing the underlying reasons causing it. They achieve this by *collectively* requesting repairs or self-providing the needed physical urban improvements and avoiding direct criticism of local authorities or their decisions. With this tactic and strategies, the active residents do not want the authorities to classify their activism as political, which would trigger the state's repressive practices towards political activities in a politically challenging context like Egypt.

Residents' activities in Cairo and insurgent citizenship are similar in inventing tactics and strategies to achieve their goals besides the official channels authorities created for the residents. There are, however, differences as well. In insurgent citizenship, residents seek to change the existing governance practice. Therefore, their invented strategies usually include unsanctioned activities, such as demonstrations, sit-ins, strikes, and acts of violence. As insurgent activism is resistive, residents do not mind clashing with the government. In contrast, the invented strategies by Cairo's active resident groups are actually in coordination with the authorities, not resistive at all, and cautious of not being criminalized, such as the invented "fixer" role. It is an unofficial invented role by the active residents that is in coordination with authorities and contributes significantly to the urban improvement of neighborhoods, even temporarily.

With this reflection, our findings contradict the extant knowledge that activism in Non-western and Global south contexts is likely to be either insurgent citizenship or quiet encroachment. As such, this study broadens the scope of our knowledge on local activism besides and beyond insurgent citizenship and quiet encroachment and enriches our understanding of the wide range of residents' activism in urban planning and governance. This knowledge better represents the local activism practiced and produced in contexts governed by regimes that oppress grass root movements and restrict the political mobilization of individuals or groups. The more we recognize and identify the different practices of local activism, the more advanced our understanding of the urban realities and the better chances we have to reimagine the future of our cities (Miraftab, 2016a).

On the scale of local activism in Cairo

There is little current knowledge regarding residents' activism in the neighborhoods of Cairo. Studies on local activism in Cairo are few, on intermittent intervals, usually on individual cases, and from a perspective of a specific local actor (Bremer, 2011; El-Azzazy & Zaazaa, 2017; El-Meehy, 2012; Galal Ahmed, 2019; Ibrahim, 2014; Ibrahim & Singerman, 2014; Shawkat et al., 2015). Thus, the existing knowledge is neither updated nor covers strategies and activities of various resident groups nor includes multiple local actors' perspectives. This study has extended the limited current research on local activism in six ways.

First, this study is one of the few studies (if not the only one) to identify different types of resident groups currently active in Cairo. Many identified groups were unorganized, with mostly one founder and two or three group administrators and no formal fund-raising channels. These unorganized groups are known locally among the residents and the local officials for pursuing better urban conditions for their neighborhoods. However, they work under the radar in terms of not being publicly covered by the media or official records. This working mode makes it difficult to find these unorganized groups, communicate with them, and obtain their trust and willingness to provide data. Identifying many unorganized groups in this study is proof of undetected local activism in the neighborhoods of Cairo. The few organized ones were either regulated in the form of associations, unions, or cooperatives. These different types of active resident groups align with the argument that civil society in many parts of the world is far from structured, largely homogeneous, and thus detectable and definable (see Bayat, 2013; Watson, 2009).

Second, interviewing members from 15 active resident groups from nine districts varying in population, density, and urban characteristics has helped assess to what extent active groups in Cairo play different roles and features in the different dimensions of local governance. Our results showed that Cairo's challenging context not only limits specific roles but also leads to commonalities in the existing roles. These existing roles align with some roles and strategies highlighted in countries in the South and pinpoint new ones. To elaborate, Cornwall & Gaventa (2000) and Mitlin (2008) highlighted the wide presence of collective self-help activities in economically struggling contexts because neither the government will provide the needed improvement nor can the residents implement and manage these improvements individually. This wide presence aligns with the significant presence of self-provider roles in implementing and managing urban improvements in Cairo. We agree with Bayat (2013) that governments in the Middle East respond positively to this role to transfer some of their responsibilities and obligations to the residents. Cairo's challenging context also motivates active residents to develop tactics

that shape new roles that we did not find in the literature on collective actions by residents. In our case, this was the fixer role that extended the concept of "everyday fixer" (Hendriks & Tops, 2005; Hulst et al., 2012) from individual practitioners to collectives of active residents.

Third, this study revealed that the nine officials from nine different districts majorly share the same perspective on residents' activism in Cairo. Local officials' interaction with active residents depends on the individual characteristics of the officials in the district offices rather than district offices as local governmental entities with defined rules and transparent systems. This dependency on individual characteristics is similar to what Bongyu (2008) describes as a "personal power" phenomenon in Cameroon, in which one person controls a governmental apparatus. At first glance, the "personal power" of the local officials may give the impression that variation exists in the perspectives of local officials on the active groups and how they perceive their activities and interact with them. However, this was not the case in Cairo. Almost all officials agreed on particular roles of active resident groups in the different governance dimensions (Chapter 5). In Chapter 6, they also agreed on claiming no responsibility for activating or taking any proactive role toward involving the residents in the governance activities of the district office. As such, they claimed that hearing the active groups that contacted district offices is their only responsibility and a sign of their support for local activism in Cairo. Even the mistrusting and vigilant attitude towards active resident groups commonly prevailed in the discourse of the nine local officials. Officials' discourse was charged with doubt that active groups might have political agendas against the country's perceived interests. Thus, they expressed their cautious attitude when interacting with active groups.

Fourth, in Chapter 6, we have seen that the rules element in Cairo's local governance practices is the starting point to which the respondents kept referring when talking about the influence of the local governance arrangements on producing limited apolitical and highly dependent activism. The significant influence of the rules is not exclusive to Cairo or politically challenging contexts. For instance, Mattijssen (2018) highlighted a persisting and guiding influence of the rules on what citizens do and cannot do in a democratic and encouraging context to activism, such as the Netherlands. We argue that the influence of the rules becomes even more crucial in Cairo's politically challenging context. If rules generally determine the barriers and opportunities for active residents and officials to act, the rules in Cairo's context mostly act as barriers with minimal opportunities for activism. The rules only allow improving the outputs of the existing governance arrangements after decisions have been made and policies and plans have been formulated. Such restrictive rules add further evidence to the dominant effect of the political environment in Cairo on all

aspects of people's lives, including local activism. The authorities in Egypt insist on putting rules that only allow a narrow space for the residents to intervene in their neighborhoods' urban governance and management, despite the difficult economic conditions and the government's inability to fulfill the social bargain. The active resident groups occupy this narrow space as it is the only available opportunity for activism. For the authorities in Cairo, expanding the narrow space of activism may inadvertently turn activism calling for the urban improvement of the neighborhoods into a wider (and undesired) call for changing the governance arrangements that cause urban deterioration. As such, the challenging political environment in Egypt and its resultant governance arrangement determine the characteristics, roles, and local actors' interactions within local activism in Cairo.

Fifth and related, our claim regarding the dominant influence of the political environment on local activism in Cairo broadens the discussion regarding what local activism authoritarian regimes tolerate. Our findings show that Cairo's politically challenging context tolerates apolitical activism that barely fixes urban deterioration without addressing the underlying governance arrangements causing it. This apolitical activism is similar to the non-civic activism described by Chen (2020) as the activism tolerated by the regime in China. It is a form of activism tackling a specific issue in a particular area for the own interest of the active group members (i.e., the people directly affected by the issue). Even in non-civic activism, residents can have political demands, such as demanding the resignation of a local official. However, in addition to this locality in scale, issues, actors, and beneficiaries, active groups in Cairo are denied accessibility to formulating policies, plans, and selecting local officials, making local activism both non-civic and apolitical.

We claim that the apolitical aspect of activism in Cairo is crucial in what the regime in Egypt can tolerate and overarches how local activism may exist and be practiced. This claim aligns with Bayat's (2013) findings that governments in the Middle East may encourage local initiatives if they do not turn oppositional. We add that being apolitical is not only about stripping the declared goals of the active groups from any intentions toward changing the governance arrangements but also about what strategies and tactics the active group chooses. The means used for activism crucially matter, even with apolitical goals and non-civic activism. Our findings showed that it is strongly present in local actors' perception that activism in Cairo is not tolerated through protests or sit-ins. The authorities are vigilant about the disruptive potential of street movements on the regime's stability. The existence of street movements risks bringing back memories of the public movements in 2011 and until 2013. These memories may provoke participants to transform their apolitical and non-civic activism into political ones that the authority may not be able to control and, therefore, will never allow. As such, the authorities in Cairo

may tolerate active groups demanding, for example, the resignation of a local official through an online campaign or an official request. However, they will not tolerate an active group organizing a protest for the removal of a park in their neighborhoods.

Sixth and finally, the expanded knowledge about the current state of local activism in Cairo raises whether this limited apolitical activism and the exclusionary government performance is something new. This question is crucial since the political environment in Egypt, with its centralized, bureaucratic, and inefficient local governance arrangement and oppressed civil society, is not new. Even before the years of the 2011 revolution, studies captured forms of local activism that relied on informal channels with apolitical notions. The residents' goals were not to change public policies or the governance of public resources but to satisfy a need for a service or improve local living conditions. An in-depth study of residents' activities in neighborhoods with low socio-economic levels by Singerman (1995) showed this type of local activism. As such, there was a perception that this form of activism is concentrated in low socio-economic neighborhoods, where government exclusion is exacerbated. In contrast, in the middle and high-level neighborhoods, the perception was that these neighborhoods were able to avoid government exclusion because they were home to the political elite or at least their residents were connected to the political elites.

However, we now find apolitical activism that depends on informal channels to be present in middle and high-level neighborhoods. Government exclusion extended to all Cairo's districts after the current regime excluded many government entities from Cairos' planning and governance and confined it to the presidency and its subordinate sovereign bodies. As such, most of Cairo's residents lost their ability to influence decision-making circles. Currently, even residents from districts that are perceived to be connected to the political elites face major urban transformations. These transformations already forcibly evicted residents from their homes, affected pedestrian security, reduced the green areas, and ruined the visual image of the neighborhoods without the ability of its residents, active groups, or political elites to stop it. Additionally, the intensified political restriction on civil society in recent years has spread local activism practices that are apolitical in their interest and strategies.

7.3.2 Societal Contribution

This research provides scholars, decision-makers, and local actors in Cairo (and beyond) with an in-depth knowledge of local activism from officials' and citizens' perspectives and in relation to the political environment and its resultant local governance practice. Such knowledge is crucial for any improvement to advance

the practice of local activism in Cairo's challenging context. It is in society's interest to know what roles local activism plays in the urban improvements of Cairo's neighborhoods and in which dimensions of the governance process. With this knowledge, local actors can make informed decisions regarding reinforcing the existing roles, enabling absent ones, or possibly creating new ones.

Advancing the roles of active residents at different dimensions in the neighborhood governance process requires different interventions at different elements in the local governance practice. This research has highlighted the challenges and constraints in the local governance practice's rules, resources, discourses, and actors influencing active residents' activities. It has also highlighted the centrality of the constraints imposed by the "rules" in shaping the local governance practice and its influence on active residents' activities. With this knowledge, it is possible to identify and prioritize interventions in the current local governance arrangements required to improve local activism. These interventions would form a new arrangement for local governance that could shape local activism based on more balanced power relations between the active residents and authorities and more engagement of residents in planning and management decisions in their neighborhoods.

Additionally, the significant influence of the rules on the limited local activism underpins the importance of shifting the political will towards establishing a more positive culture towards citizens' engagement in the society, including its government and non-government entities. On the one hand, this study has clearly identified where and how interventions in governance practices and arrangements are needed. On the other hand, it also highlighted how far the current political will is still removed from applying such needed interventions. In other words, these interventions are unlikely to occur soon. With such knowledge, we become aware of how important it is to co-investigate with residents, local officials, and central government officials what gradual change in local governance the political system of Egypt may allow and the local actors may accept to initiate.

7.3.3 Methodological Contribution

This research applied a combination of existing and newly developed theoretical frameworks. We did not only attempt to use well-known theoretical frameworks and approaches as such but also to contribute to these frameworks through adaptations and modification. For instance, in Chapter 4, to explore the "rights-based practices" and "interaction with local authorities" elements in local activism, we could not find a clear theoretical framework in the literature on "citizenship" and

"neighborhood governance" that combines both elements. We combined the two concepts of "differentiated citizenship" (Holston, 2011) and the "exit, voice, loyal" (Hirschman, 1970) to identify the determinants needed to examine the "rights-based practices" element. As for exploring the "interaction with local authorities" element, we identified the needed determinants by combining literature from the fields of "informality," collaboration and partnerships," and "conflict management".

In Chapter 5, we found approaches to examining the citizen engagement process or the output of citizen engagement in the neighborhood governance process. We have developed a framework combining approaches from a process-focused lens and a product-focused one. It guided exploring the extent to which the user, self-provider, advocate, and maker roles (process-focused) are represented in the "formulation," "implementation," and "management" dimensions of neighborhood governance (product-focused). Even after modifying different approaches into a combined theoretical framework, new findings from the data analysis revealed the necessity to extend the framework with a "fixer" role in the management dimension of governance.

Additionally, we have combined the "Policy Arrangement Approach" (PAA) (Arts et al., 2000) and the "practice" concept (Arts et al., 2013) to identify the arrangements shaping local governance practice and their effects on active residents' activities (i.e., local activism). As a well-known approach, the PAA studies how a specific local governance arrangement is temporarily shaped by breaking it into actors, rules, resources, and discourse and analyzing their interlinkages. However, these dimensions lacked the aspect of actors' activities and thus lacked the active residents' activities aspect we focus on. The "practice" concept focuses on the ensemble of doings, sayings, and things related to local governance. By having the *doings*, the concept includes actors' activities. The combination between the dimensions of the PAA and those of the "practice" concept allowed us to expand the dimension of "actors" to include actors' activities (Chapter 6).

The modifications that occurred during the frameworks' development and after applying them add to the arsenal of theoretical frameworks researchers can use to map and analyze local activism in complex settings and contexts. It is essential not to use these theoretical frameworks as strict molds that residents' activities and state–citizen interactions should exactly fit and align. Instead, they should be used as a guide to explore these various activities and interactions in a context where researchers are open to finding activities from residents that may shape different activities and interactions.

7.4 Research Limitations

This research focuses on understanding local activism in Cairo as comprehensively as possible, including the perspective of different actors. The research mainly used semi-structured, in-depth interviews with active residents and local officials to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of different local actors and make sense of their attitude towards residents' involvement in neighborhood governance. The constraints of time imposed by Covid 19 and Cairo's data-poor and risky research environment were the main factors shaping the research limitations.

In an ideal situation, we would have two rounds of interviews; one to explore local activism and another to explore with local actors the possibilities of gradually and realistically enhancing citizens' engagement in local governance. However, the spread of the Covid-19 virus posed tight restrictions to people's movements and gatherings worldwide, including in Egypt. For instance, Egypt's public offices (including district offices) banned direct contact with the public. Consequently, the fieldwork got postponed for 8 months until the Corona restrictions in Egypt were reduced to the extent that would allow for conducting interviews. Facing this unforeseen delay and being under a time commitment from a scholarship have led to canceling the second fieldwork and modifying the research aim. As such, the study did not include the possibilities of enhancing citizens' engagement to its aim.

Cairo's data-poor and often risky research environment on activism has significantly led to most of the research limitations. In Cairo, as in many politically challenging contexts, recorded data and information exchange is severely poor. It is because neither government collect data and makes it publicly accessible, nor researchers can collect them freely themselves, nor are participants comfortable expressing their opinions freely. These challenges are mainly the case with topics considered politically sensitive or possibly critical to government entities in power (Bellin et al., 2018). In Egypt, the topics of activism and citizens' involvement in public affairs are politically sensitive to the extent that much of resident groups' activism is practiced under the radar. Many active resident groups are known locally among the residents and the local officials but not publicly covered on the news, media, or official records. Accordingly, many researchers will either study the few organized groups or depend on their knowledge of some resident initiative in a specific neighborhood. Overcoming these restrictions has shaped many of our choices while conducting this research. However, it also limited how we collect, analyze and present the data and make them accessible.

First, we used Facebook to search for, identify and communicate with active resident groups and capture as many forms of activism in Cairo as possible. Relying on Facebook was crucial as it is one of the few online channels for citizens to create groups, control their privacy settings and collectively discuss public affairs. Besides, it is the most used social media platform in Egypt. However, relying on social media has limitations, as we cannot guarantee to capture the full range of active resident groups in Cairo. There may be active groups that are either undetectable due to privacy settings, based on mobile chat apps, or without a virtual presence. However, the widespread use of Facebook and the fact that we found all active groups known to us in Cairo on Facebook made it the most convenient platform to capture activism by organized and unorganized groups. Thus, we claim it uncovered most of the types of active resident groups and their practices of local activism in Cairo.

Second, most active groups that responded and connected with us ranged from middle to high socio-economic districts, despite identifying active resident groups in lower levels districts such as Alzaituon and Ain Shams. These identified active groups were fewer than those in higher levels districts. This small presence on Facebook does not by definition mean fewer active resident groups in such districts. Instead, it indicates that they may not be not using social media for communication extensively, and even when they exist, they do not interact with us as external researchers. So although we believe our results cover common roles and frequent practices of local activism in Cairo's formal neighborhoods, we acknowledge that it explored activism in lower levels districts only at the initial phase of Facebook content analysis.

Third, we have taken extra measures to protect participants' safety, which comes at the cost of how we present and support our findings. Researchers working in politically challenging contexts must prioritize gathering data without compromising the safety of the participants (Bellin et al., 2018). For instance, we have avoided adding pictures, videos, and print screens of residents' posts and comments from the active groups' FB accounts. Adding such material may risk revealing the group's name or the active member who posted them. Indeed, some of these groups are public pages (others are closed groups that require join requests). Thus, their posts and pictures might be accessible if authorities want to track them. Nevertheless, we should not facilitate such risk with our publications. These groups are in a bigger pool of other Facebook groups and pages for the same neighborhoods that address the residents in Arabic. However, we could put them at risk when we single them out, translate their posts, and share their content worldwide under the topic of activism. Additionally, we anonymized the active groups in this study with a code containing the group's district instead of the neighborhood. Scaling up the coding to the district scale widens the area that defines the active groups since each district includes 4–5 neighborhoods on average within its boundaries. This broader

scale should impede the identification of the neighborhood and reduce the risk of identifying the active group.

Similarly, with the interviews, we have chosen not to make any interview transcripts accessible in a repository so as not to endanger the safety of the interviewees. According to Bellin et al. (2018), public accessibility of extensively anonymized raw data is meaningless as it losses its contextualization, while providing such contextualization could compromise the safety of the participants. We have worked on balancing these measures with an accurate description of the methods in the empirical parts of the research, which outlines the data collection procedures and decisions. Additionally, we have provided translated examples of posts shared by the active groups so that readers can view the nature of the active groups' posts and how we processed them.

Fourth, we have faced challenges in connecting with and gaining participants' trust from a few active groups and all local officials. It is another core challenge resulting from the risks of facing state reprisals for expressing opinions freely to strangers in politically challenging contexts. In Cairo, the strategies to deal with this challenge differ between residents and officials. In the cases of unreachable active groups, we have capitalized on our personal network to find mutual connections with active members in these groups. When these mutual connections were found, they were our entry to gaining the trust of active group members. This strategy has worked in most cases, but in a few cases, the active members seemed reticent in their responses, making their interviews short and brief. Such brief interviews took around 30 minutes instead of 60 minutes on average with the rest of the active members.

As for the local officials, we needed a security permit to conduct interviews. These permits specified which officials from the selected districts will be interviewed and approved for the content of the proposed semi-structured interview questions. Additionally, a letter from an Egyptian university to prove the researcher's affiliation and endorse their research was issued and addressed to each local official individually. Despite acquiring these documents, some local officials refused to conduct the interviews on their own responsibility. They requested an extra letter from the Governorate office stating the governorate's approval of these interviews. Local officials became open to being interviewed only after acquiring this letter. Despite all these reassurances, some officials seemed cautious and short in answering some questions.

In conclusion, conducting research in politically challenging contexts poses many restrictions on how the data is collected and made publicly accessible. It requires adopting different strategies to approach the different types of participants to

gain their trust. It also requires taking extra measures to protect the participants' confidentiality. To balance these restrictions and the limited accessibility to raw data, we have opened up about our methods and focused on delivering clarity and understanding of complex and inaccessible environments to the best of our abilities.

7.5 Future Research

This research has uncovered many aspects regarding local activism in Cairo's main agglomeration. However, several directions for future research could build on our findings and complement them for a better and more comprehensive understanding. First, our approach to finding active resident groups in Cairo yielded results from middle and high socio-economic neighborhoods. Future research adopting different methods to explore and reach out to lower socio-economic neighborhoods would complement our understanding of local activism in Cairo's formal neighborhoods. For instance, Singerman (1995) spent several years living with families in low-income neighborhoods in Cairo to observe and gain in-depth insights into residents' approaches to involve in urban politics.

Second, we chose not to include informal areas in our study because they have distinct stakeholders and are subject to social, legal, political, and economic constraints that differ from those in formal areas. We argued that the different circumstances of informal settlements create different incentives for local activism and a different complexity in the relationship between the state and citizens. Future research could explore local activism within the specific complexity of the state–citizen relationship in informal areas. Exploring local activism in informal areas would complement our understanding of local activism in Cairo's main agglomeration.

Third, our study focused on local activism in multiple districts by active resident groups with different organizational types. It explored common characteristics of limited local activism in Cairo's challenging context, linking them to the local governance process. This cross-sectional nature of the research focused on each active resident group as one unit and captured the status of local activism at the time being. Future research may detail the individual experiences of active members, link them to their personal profiles and explore the longitudinal variation or change in their roles, strategies, and interactions. This approach to studying local activism in Cairo recognizes and explores the individual experiences of active resident group

members in Cairo. The combined knowledge from the zoomed-out and cross-sectional approach, as in our research, with the individual longitudinal one would provide a more comprehensive understanding of local activism in Cairo that draws general conclusions and simultaneously recognizes the individual specificities.

Fourth, during interviews with residents and local officials, few other actors were mentioned to influence one way or another the activities of the active groups or their interaction with officials, such as donations from the *local businesses*. or the mediation of *Parliament members*. Future research can specifically focus on conducting a broader stakeholder analysis, including these actors and potential others, on understanding their levels of participation, interest, and influence on local activism and governance in Cairo. This knowledge, along with our study, leads to a deeper understanding of the different potential actors whose effective involvement can shape a local governance practice that is more "multiple actors" based in the context of Cairo.

Finally, based on the findings of this research, future research on local activism in a challenging context like Cairo should relate its findings with the political context for a better understanding. The political environment is the elephant in the room (i.e., Cairo in our case) that studying local activism in contexts with authoritarian regimes can not ignore or pass it quickly. When we traced in detail the challenges in the local governance practice that produces local activism in Cairo, we found multiple pinpoints regarding the significant influence of the political environment. Future research may build on and use the uncovered linkages and sources of limited local activism to co-research with local actors the possible interventions and entry points in the current local governance arrangements that could positively shift local activism.

Appendices

Appendix A

TABLE APP.A.1 List of topics and suggested interview questions for the active members

List of topics		Suggested questions to investigate the topics (For active members)
Background		- When did the group start? - Aim? - Activities? - Structural arrangement (if found)? - The number of members?
The active group's motivation	Rights[12,13]/ needs motivations	What motivates the group to intervene in the neighborhood?
	Voice/exit tendency	How do you translate this need/right into action?
	Effectiveness of voice/ exit solution	To what extent do these actions really work?
	Challenges	- How would the group prefer to solve the problems of the neighborhood ideally? - What prevents the group?
The active group's relationship with local authorities (in terms of collaboration)	Level of collaboration	- How would you describe the group's collaboration with the authorities? - What is the role of local authorities in the formulation and implementation of the group's activities? - To what extent is the group satisfied with this collaboration?
	Resources shared	- What resources do you share with local authorities? - What resources from the local authorities are accessible to you?
	Communication Channels	What channels of communication do you use to communicate with the local authorities?
	Challenges	- What is hampering the collaboration between the group and local authorities? - To what extent does the group believe in the ability and willingness of local authorities to collaborate with the group?
	Importance	How important is it to be connected to the local authorities?
	Willingness	Considering the mentioned challenges and the importance of connecting with local authorities, to what extent is the group willing to connect with local authorities?

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12 *Right-based solutions occur when the residents become aware of the gap between what they believe is their right and what they get offered.*

13 *Hints for such right might be expressed as a constitutional right or based on paying taxes for a particular service or even based on observing the ability of local author*ities to provide better service to neighboring districts.

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TABLE APP.A.1 List of topics and suggested interview questions for the active members

List of topics		Suggested questions to investigate the topics (For active members)
The official recognition of the active resident groups	Perception toward official recognition	To what extent do you feel your group is recognized?
	Basis of official recognition	How do you present the group to the authorities?
	Importance of legal registration	Are you legally registered as an organization or union? Why yes? Or why not?
	Awareness	To what extent is the group aware of the procedures of being a formal group?
	Potentials and risks	What are the implications of having/not having a legal status? (Positive or negative)
Conflicts with local authorities	Level of confrontation	To what extent does the group pressure the authorities to solve problems in the neighborhood?
	Strategies and tactics	How does the group apply this pressure?
	Effectiveness of confrontation	To what extent do these strategies work?
	Authorities' reaction to the confrontation	How do the authorities respond to this kind of pressure?
	Awareness	What other means can active groups use to pressure the authorities to solve challenges in the neighborhood?
	Reasons for escalated conflicts	When has the group ever had a conflict with the local authorities? Could you give examples?
Future of the active group		What do you think will happen with the group in the next years?

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Appendix B

TABLE APP.B.1 List of topics and suggested interview questions for the local officials.

List of topics		Suggested questions to investigate the topics (For local officials)
Background		- What are the main tasks/activities of the district office? - Structural arrangement? - Sources of Funds?
The active group's motivation	Knowledge of the existing active resident groups	- How many active resident groups in the district are you aware of? - What is the relevance of this number?
	Perception of rights[14]/ need-based motives	Why were these groups founded?
	Rights/need-based importance	Why do you think the presence of such groups is important in general?
	Effectiveness	What is your opinion on the activities of the groups already existing?
	Challenges	- How would you prefer the role(s) of these groups to be in the neighborhoods? - What prevents this role(s)?
The active group's relationship with local authorities (in terms of collaboration)	Level of collaboration	- How would you describe the district office's collaboration with the active groups? - To what extent are you satisfied with this collaboration? - What is the role of the district office in the formulation and implementation of the group's activities?
	Resources shared	- What resources does the district office share with the active groups? - What resources from the active groups are shared with you?
	Communication Channels	- How do the active groups contact you? - What channels of communication with the district office are available for the active groups?
	Challenges	What is hampering the collaboration between the district office and the active groups?
	Importance	How important is it for the district office to be connected to the active groups?
	Willingness and ability	Considering the mentioned challenges and the importance of connecting with active groups, to what extent is the district office willing and able to connect with the active groups?

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14 *Hints for such right might be expressed as a constitutional right or based on paying taxes for a particular service or even based on observing the ability of local authorities to provide better service* to neighboring districts.

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TABLE APP.B.1 List of topics and suggested interview questions for the local officials.

List of topics		Suggested questions to investigate the topics (For local officials)
The official recognition of the active resident groups	Perception toward official recognition	To what extent and when does the district office recognize an active group?
	Types of officially recognized groups	What are the organizational types of active groups in the district?
	Reasons	- Are all these groups legally registered as an organization or union? - If yes, what motivated them to be registered? - If not, why do you think there are unregistered groups?
	Awareness	To what extent do you think the residents know the options and procedures for establishing formal active groups?
	Potentials and risks	What are the impacts of having/not having a legal status? (Positive or negative)
Conflicts with local authorities	Level of confrontation	How do active groups usually express their demands to solve challenges in the neighborhood?
	Strategies and tactics	What means do active groups usually adopt in case of disagreement with the district office?
	Reaction	How do you respond to such means?
	Perceptions of Options for conflict management escalation	What are the available options for active groups to manage a conflict/ disagreement with the district office? Or to demand a need in the neighborhood?
	Awareness	To what extent do you think the active groups know these means?
	Reasons for escalated conflicts	When has the district office ever had a conflict with active groups? Could you give examples?
Future of active groups		What will happen with the active groups in the next years?

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Appendix C

TABLE APP.C.1 The source and license for the images used in Figure 2.6

Image	Source and license
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Almaadi	Wael Aboulsaadat (https://www.flickr.com/photos/waels/15269916770/in/album-72157645163107480/), cropped.

Appendix D

TABLE APP.D.1 The Attributions for the icons used in Figure 4.2

Icon	Attribution
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TABLE APP.D.1 The Attributions for the icons used in Figure 4.2

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	Demolish icon created by Darius Dan – Flaticon https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon/demolish_1362367
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TABLE APP.D.1 The Attributions for the icons used in Figure 4.2

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	Forbidden icon by Freepik – Flaticon https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon/forbidden_2576827

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Appendix E

TABLE APP.E.1 An overview of the respondents and the active groups in this study.

District	Active resident groups				Officials Code
	Group Code*	Aims and Activities	Number of interviewees	Code	
Alnozha	UG (1)	• Mobilize the residents to exchange memories and news and discuss problems and solutions. • Communicate residents' complaints to local authorities and follow up on authorities' response.	1	Member 1	1
	UG (2)	• Provide information regarding the services, businesses, and any events in the neighborhoods. • Link the residents with officials by communicating residents' complaints or proposals and following up on them. • Campaigning for the provision of safe crossings for pedestrians.	1	Member 2	
Alwaily	UG (3)	• Report the problems regarding sewerage, roads' pavement, and garbage collection to local authorities and follow up on their repairs.	1	Member 3	2
Hadayek Alkobba	UG (4)	• Celebrate and raise awareness regarding the valuable heritage of the district. • Communicate residents' complaints to local authorities. • Share local news.	2	Member 4 Member 5	3
Alazbakia	Union (1)	Focuses on the maintenance, cleanliness, and safety of the area through: • Employing private security and cleaning workers. • Funding and managing the maintenance of the Softscape (trees and shrubs) and the Hardscape (benches, lighting poles, pavement, and tiles)	2	Member 6 Member 7	4
Masr Algadida	Association (1)	• Preserve and document the architectural value of the neighborhood and promote its urban heritage. • Protect the green areas. • Provide traffic solutions based on public and environmentally friendly modes of transportation. • Act as a watchdog group to make sure that building and construction bylaws are upheld.	1	Member 8	5

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TABLE APP.E.1 An overview of the respondents and the active groups in this study.

District	Active resident groups				Officials Code
	Group Code*	Aims and Activities	Number of interviewees	Code	
Almaadi	Association (2)	• Encourage the preservation of trees and nature conservation. • Protect the neighborhood's architectural and urban heritage from transformations caused by huge advertisement panels and illegal cafes inside residential areas. • Advocate against issuing new building permits for high-rise buildings to avoid pressuring the infrastructure and traffic problems.	1	Member 9	6
	Union (2)	• Upgrade deteriorated roads and main squares, including pavement, tiling, plantation, street lighting, and cleaning. • Advocate against issuing new building permits for high-rise buildings to avoid pressuring the infrastructure and traffic problems.	1	Member 10	
Almokattam	UG (5)	• Discuss the district's problems and propose solutions in front of the officials who are members of the group.	1	Member 11	7
East Nasr City (ENC)	UG (6)	• Collect and discuss the problems faced by the residents. • Communicate residents' complaints to Parliament representatives, media, and newspapers. • Few streets clean up and small parks maintenance campaigns.	1	Member 12	8
	UG (7)	• Organize local street improvement campaigns, including cleanups, fences paintings, sidewalk tiling, and tree planting. • Install security gates at the neighborhood's entrances and hire a private security company. • Organize garbage collection from houses. • Report residents' complaints regarding streetlighting, roads' pavement, and garbage collection to local authorities and follow up on their responses.	2	Member 13 Member 14	
	Union (3)	The union focuses on the maintenance, cleanliness, and safety of the neighborhood by: • Reporting the deterioration of pavements, sidewalks, and street lighting to local authorities and following up on their repairs. • Organizing garbage collection from houses. • Installing security gates at the neighborhood's entrances and hiring a private security company. • Properly insulating lampposts' cables for safety. • Securing neighborhood electricity rooms against theft. • Repair buildings' sewerage.	2	Member 15 Member 16	

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TABLE APP.E.1 An overview of the respondents and the active groups in this study.

District	Active resident groups				Officials Code
	Group Code*	Aims and Activities	Number of interviewees	Code	
East Nasr City (ENC)	Cooperative (1)	• Cleanup streets regularly. • Maintain street lighting in collaboration with the district office. • Repair buildings' sewerage. • Manage and maintain shared gardens and plant trees. • Report residents' complaints regarding streetlighting, roads' pavement, and infringements on public spaces to local authorities and follow up on their responses.	1	Member 17	8
	UG (8)	• Report residents' complaints regarding garbage collection and street lighting to the district office. • Fight corruption in the district office by reporting building violations, infringements by shops on sidewalks, and low-quality urban improvements from contractors hired by the district office to Parliament representatives, Governor, and The Administrative Control Authority.	1	Member 18	
Gharb	Association (3)	• Involve residents in various social awareness campaigns, such as promoting garbage sorting in houses and discouraging the usage of plastic bags. • Act as a watchdog group to make sure that building and construction bylaws are upheld, particularly concerning uncontrolled urban growth. • Document the old trees and ensure their maintenance. • Organize regular street cleanups. • Install bike racks to encourage bike riding.	1	Member 19	9

** UG refers to Unorganized Group*

Appendix F

TABLE APP.F.1 An overview of the active groups and respondents' codes.

District	Active resident groups				Officials Code
	Type of organization	Aims and Activities (as stated by the members or mentioned on the groups' online platforms)	Number of interviewees	Code	
Alnozha	Unorganized group	To Improve the quality of life in the district through: • Mobilizing the residents to exchange memories and news and discussing problems and solutions. • Collecting residents' complaints and communicating them to local authorities, and following up on them.	1	Member 1	1
		A social group and an exchange platform that: • Provides information regarding the services, businesses, and any events in the neighborhoods. • Connects the residents with officials by communicating residents' complaints or proposals and following up on them.	1	Member 2	
Alwaily	Unorganized group	• To activate civil society and encourage voluntary work. • To report the problems regarding sewerage, roads' pavement, and garbage collection to local authorities and follow up on their responses.	1	Member 3	2
Hadayek Alkobba	Unorganized group	A platform for the resident to express their voice to: • Celebrate the valuable heritage of the district • Highlights the problems in the district and communicate them to local authorities and follow up on them • Share local news	2	Member 4	3
				Member 5	
Alazbakeya	Occupants' union	The union focuses on the maintenance, cleanliness, and safety of the area by collecting monthly fees from the members to: • Employ private security and cleaning workers. • Maintain of the Softscape (trees and shrubs) and the Hardscape (benches, lighting poles, pavement, and tiles).	2	Member 6	4
				Member 7	

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TABLE APP.F.1 An overview of the active groups and respondents' codes.

District	Active resident groups				Officials Code
	Type of organization	Aims and Activities (as stated by the members or mentioned on the groups' online platforms)	Number of interviewees	Code	
Misr Algadida	Non-profit association	To revive and protect the quality of life in the district by: • Preserving and documenting the architectural and urban value in the neighborhood and promoting cultural heritage. • Protecting the green zones and parks. • Providing traffic and transportation solutions to reduce traffic jams. • Tackling the waste management challenges in the area. • Acting as a watchdog group to make sure that building and construction bylaws are upheld in the neighborhood, particularly in architecturally valuable buildings. • Installing bike racks in the district to encourage bike riding.	1	Member 8	5
Almaadi	Non-profit association	• To encourage the preservation of trees and nature conservation. • To preserve the architectural and urban heritage inside the area against building new high-rise buildings, huge advertisement panels, deterioration of sidewalks, and illegal cafes inside residential areas. • Advocate against issuing new building permits for high-rise buildings to avoid infrastructure damage and traffic problems.	1	Member 9	6
	Occupants' union	The union depends on collecting financial contributions and large donations from residents and business owners to: • Upgrade the deteriorated roads and main squares, including pavement, tiling, plantation, street lighting, and cleaning. • Advocate against issuing new building permits for high-rise buildings to avoid infrastructure damage and traffic problems.	1	Member 10	
Almokattam	Unorganized group	• To connect the residents of the district with each other. • To discuss the district's problems and propose solutions for them in front of the officials who are members of the group. • To communicate resident's voice to the officials.	1	Member 11	7

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TABLE APP.F.1 An overview of the active groups and respondents' codes.

District	Active resident groups				Officials Code
	Type of organization	Aims and Activities (as stated by the members or mentioned on the groups' online platforms)	Number of interviewees	Code	
East Nasr City (ENC)	Unorganized group	A platform to: • Collect the problems faced by the residents. • Exchange views with residents regarding solving the district's problems. • Present the problems to influential people and channels such as Parliament representatives, media, and newspapers.	1	Member 12	8
	Unorganized group	A social group to raise awareness of residents' rights and duties towards the neighborhood, through: • Street cleaning campaigns. • Tiling and painting the sidewalks. • Planting trees in public areas. • Installing security gates at the main entrances of the neighborhood. • Collecting monthly fees from the residents to hire a private security company inside the neighborhood. • Organizing garbage collection from houses. • Documenting and reporting problems to local authorities.	2	Member 13 Member 14	
	Occupants' union	The union focuses on the maintenance, cleanliness, and safety of the neighborhood by: • Reporting the deterioration of pavements, sidewalks, and street lighting to local authorities and following up on their repairs. • Organizing garbage collection from houses. • Collecting monthly fees from the residents to install security gates, hire a private security company and fund the maintenance of buildings' sewerage.	2	Member 15 Member 16	
	Cooperative	Improve the urban quality and environment inside the neighborhood by: • Cleaning and sweeping of streets regularly. • Repairing street lighting in collaboration with the district office. • Repairing buildings' sewage systems. • Maintaining the public gardens and planting trees. • Reporting the deterioration of pavements, sidewalks, and street lighting to local authorities and following up on their repairs. • Reporting infringements on public spaces to local authorities.	1	Member 17	
	Unorganized group	A platform to: • Link the residents with officials by communicating residents' complaints and following up on them. • Fighting corruption by reporting chronic problems to influential people and entities such as Parliament representatives, Governor, and The Administrative Control Authority.	1	Member 18	

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TABLE APP.F.1 An overview of the active groups and respondents' codes.

District	Active resident groups				Officials Code
	Type of organization	Aims and Activities (as stated by the members or mentioned on the groups' online platforms)	Number of interviewees	Code	
Gharb	Non-profit association	To ensure that the neighborhood provides a safe, clean, economically dynamic, and aesthetically pleasing place for people to live, work, and visit by: • Involving residents in various social awareness campaigns, such as promoting garbage sorting in houses and discouraging the usage of plastic bags. • Acting as a watchdog group to ensure that building and construction bylaws are upheld, particularly concerning uncontrolled urban growth. • Documenting the old trees in the neighborhood and ensuring their maintenance. • Organizing regular street clean-up campaigns. • Installing bike racks in the district to encourage bike riding.	1	Member 19	9

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Curriculum Vitae

Aya Elwageeh was born in Gharbeya, Egypt, in 1989. She is an educator with organizational and leadership experience in urban planning courses and urban design studios. Her research interests and expertise include community engagement, local governance, activism, and sustainable urban development.

During the PhD, Aya joined the coordination team of the massive open online course MOOC "Rethink the City: New Approaches to Global and Local Urban Challenges." She mainly supported in preparing and launching a new module in the course on the MENA region. She provided material support for lectures, prepared quizzes and assignments and contacted lecturers from the MENA region. She also recorded a lecture in the course exploring active resident groups in Cairo. Afterward, Aya became the teaching assistant for the complete Arabic version of the MOOC. She translated, reviewed, edited the prepared course material and moderated the course's platform. Aya also wrote a chapter (to be published soon) in the "Rethink the City Book," reflecting on the topics and issues discussed in the MENA region module in the MOOC. Aya also reviewed an article submitted to the Journal of Urban Affairs for a special issue on the Identity of African cities.

Education

2012 – 2014 **Master of Science** (Double degree)
Major: Integrated Urbanism and Sustainable Design
Topic: Landscape Aesthetics and the Introduction of Solar Energy Farms in the Western Desert of Egypt
University of Stuttgart, Germany, and Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt

2006 – 2011 **Bachelor of Science**
Graduation project: The Urban Revitalization of Rosetta City Waterfront
Section of Urban Planning and Design, Department of Architectural Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt

Work experience

2018 - 2023 **Ph.D. Candidate**
Urbanism Department, Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment,
Delft University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands

2020-2021 **Teaching Assistant**
MOOC “Rethink the City: New Approaches to Global and Local Urban Challenges.”
The Arabic version "إعادة تصور المدينة: نُهج جديدة للتحديات الحضرية العالمية والمحلية"
EDRAAK Platform for Training and Social Development, Amman, Jordan

2019 - 2020 **Instructor and Coordinator**
MOOC “Rethink the City: New Approaches to Global and Local Urban Challenges.”
Delft University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands

2014 - 201 **Senior Assistant Lecturer**
Urban Planning and Design Department, Faculty of Engineering,
Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt

2014 - 2017 **Senior Assistant Lecturer**
Integrated Urbanism and Sustainable Design Master Program,
Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt

2011 - 2012 **Assistant Lecturer**
Urban Planning and Design Department, Faculty of Engineering,
Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt

Awards

2018 - 2022 **Full Ph.D. scholarship**
The Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education

2012 - 2014 **Full MSc. Scholarship**
The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and
The Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education

List of Publications

Peer-reviewed:

Elwageeh, A., Kleinhans, R., & van Ham, M. (2023). Exploring local activism in the neighborhoods of Cairo. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *45*(3), 546–569. https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2022.2125400

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23#12

Local Activism in Urban Neighborhood Governance

The case of Cairo, Egypt

Aya Elwageeh

This study investigates local activism in politically challenging contexts, focusing on Cairo. In such contexts, active resident groups strive for urban improvement, while governance arrangements often disregard citizen involvement in urban and public affairs. Cairo presents an exemplary case of local activism in a politically challenging and under-researched context. The study explores the characteristics, roles, and interrelations of active resident groups with local governance arrangements and their deviations from existing literature. It employs a qualitative methodology with observations and semi-structured interviews with local officials and active residents from nine different districts. The study uses Facebook to select, observe, and analyze the activities of multiple active resident groups and contributes to theoretical frameworks for analyzing local activism in complex contexts. It reveals the dominant and absent roles and the governance dimensions (un)attainable by active residents. It also traces the sources of limited local activism in the existing governance arrangements in Cairo, highlighting the importance and difficulty of changing governance arrangements in Egypt. The study broadens our understanding of local activism in the Global South beyond dominant forms of activism.

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