
CLUSTER, Cairo

Promoting a sustainable urban environment and a more diverse and accessible public space

Description

Cairo Lab Urban Studies and Training and Environmental Research is an interdisciplinary platform for urban design and research that aims to establish a critical space for urban discourse, engaging questions of public space and more specifically urban informality.

CLUSTER was founded in 2011 when Cairo was going through a radical transformation on the street and on a political level.

The activities of CLUSTER are divided into four areas: design projects, research, programs and pedagogy. Projects include:

- Investigating new approaches to informal practices that would generate alternative modes of urban development

- Developing a platform integrating art and culture as urban catalysts

- Establishing a networking hub, promoting interdisciplinary modes of practice that would bring together architects and planners,

designers, artists and social scientists, to work with stakeholders and local communities

Establishing a collaborative research framework, open to local and international universities and research groups, that offers research backup to groups and individuals in terms of resources and logistical support

Results

Designed several downtown passages in Cairo (Kodak Passageway, Philips Passageway, Hassan Khan Exhibition)

Designed the Downtown Cairo

Passageways website. This website offers a glimpse into a larger body of information, a database on Downtown passageways and in-between spaces that CLUSTER has mapped over three years: including activities, patterns of use, typology and genealogy, materiality and texture, circulation and access, roofing and proportion, in addition to territoriality and tools of demarcation, and other spatial and visual documentation and analysis. The website also features interviews with local community members and stakeholders.

Books published: *Learning from Cairo*, *Housing Cairo: The Informal Response*, *Creative Cities: Re-framing Downtown Cairo*, *Cairo Downtown Passageways*, and *Archiving the city in flux*.

Great media impact: more than 100 articles published around the world.

Did you know?

The book *Housing Cairo: The Informal Response* has been awarded by the '2016

DAM Architectural Book Award’ and the ‘2017 National Urban Design Book Award’. CLUSTER has an online mapping initiative that documents urban elements in Cairo, accessible to all. It includes a series of interactive maps and archives, urban tours and thematic itineraries, as well as pilot interventions in public space.

Sustainability and Replicability

CLUSTER is an independent platform that maintains a critical distance with the government and the private sector. That is why CLUSTER works directly with local communities, speaking directly to the community and keeping in mind the urban plan which respects different groups, security, authorities and historical centers.

Their local small-scale projects do not require vast amounts of funding and could be replicated in other cities by committed citizens coming from an art, science, architecture and business background...

Lessons learned

Investigating new approaches to informal practices can generate alternative modes of urban development, and allow a more sustainable, diverse and accessible public space.

Take action

Think about how public space can be improved in your city. What would you change? Meet with a group of people with similar interests in your city to discuss what and how to address urban issues.

Spread the message and promote
the **CLUSTER**.

Interact with the initiative
on **Facebook** and **YouTube**.

Keep in touch with Cluster to support their
activities.