Chapter 7

KBUD as an Alternative Approach for the Development of Cairo’s Informal Settlements: Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates the opportunities and challenges related to KBUD found in Cairo’s informal settlements. Also, it explores the ability of KBUD approach in dealing with the development of such settlements instead of the adopted approaches which failed in approaching the economic aspect within these communities. The chapter provides insights on the important role KBUD could play not only in the economic growth of richer and more prestigious contexts but also in poor communities which have a lot of hidden potentials. Accordingly, the chapter investigates Cairo’s informal settlements, the policies and approaches used and applied, and the related defects and shortcomings. Then, it explores the theoretical framework of KBUD. Following this, opportunities and challenges related to KBUD in Cairo’s informal settlements are discussed. By the end, the chapter sheds light on some points and concludes with recommendations for readapting KBUD approach when developing Cairo’s informal settlements.

INTRODUCTION

Cairo is the largest city in the Middle-East and second-largest in Africa. As most of the mega cities in the Global South, Cairo has been expanding rapidly through the growth of informal settlements. According to the 2016 Egyptian Census, around 10% of the Egyptian population lives in Cairo (CAPMS, 2016). Around 40% of Cairo’s population lives in informal settlements as estimated by the Ministry of Housing (Tadamun, 2014). Cairo gains its importance and attractive power because of its deep-rooted history as well as being the center of the country’s political and economic life and most of the industrial activities. This leads to the centralization of jobs which attract rural populations to immigrate internally.
KBUD as an Alternative Approach for the Development of Cairo’s Informal Settlements

to work in Cairo and enhance their living situation (Kipper, 2009). This emphasizes what mentioned by Collier (2013), that migration, under ordinary circumstances, is usually motivated by escaping from insufficient social patterns towards other patterns offering them better economic conditions. Accordingly, the economic factor is considered the primary reason for the formation of these informal settlements.

Although adopting a range of policies and legislations by the Egyptian successive governments to slow down and limit the informal urban growth, and to upgrade and develop this kind of settlements starting from the 1990s till now, the economic and the financial issues are still the hardest part to approach especially because of economic challenges faced by Egypt as a developing society. This also depends on how the government and the policy makers see this kind of settlement. The government and the policymakers see informal settlements as a huge problem which should be treated as a temporary one that should eventually be demolished for building new housing projects or just raised to a standard and legalized state by providing basic services and infrastructure (Mostafa 2013). This kind of approach depends mainly on huge budgets which are usually not available.

This raises the importance of searching for alternative approaches to tackle the economic aspects seriously through activating them within the developing process of Cairo’s informal settlements. This opens the door for rethinking the development approaches adopted by the policy makers when dealing with the development of these settlements. Most of these strategies are delayed and failed in achieving a great significance with the informality challenge facing Cairo. On the other hand, the extremely fast bounds in science and information are the main cause of the dramatic change from the ‘information’ era towards the ‘knowledge’ era (Yigitcanlar, 2008). This leads to the emergence of Knowledge-Based Urban Development (KBUD) which became known as a strategic development approach could be applied to human settlements and a promising strategy for sustainable development of cities (Yigitcanlar et al., 2008).

This chapter aims to examine the existing opportunities and challenges found in Cairo’s informal settlements related to KBUD theoretical framework. Also, it sheds light on the extents to which KBUD approach could deal with the development of this kind of settlements. This research gains its importance from two points. The first one is the shortening of most the approaches and strategies dealing with the development and upgrading of Cairo’s informal settlements in approaching the economic aspect as most of the plans broke down or were postponed because of the lack of funding. The second one is that the chapter provides fruitful discussion and insights on the important role KBUD could play in developing Cairo’s informal settlements not only in the economic growth of richer and more prestigious contexts. To carry out this research, the chapter adopts a theoretical-based approach through a desktop research method to review the literature and examine different related studies and publications. Accordingly, This Chapter first sheds light on the evolution of Cairo’s informal settlements, the main context, and the main reasons behind. The chapter, then, reviews the policies and approaches used and applied through the governmental and non-governmental efforts represented in some attempts and interventions done by donor agencies and civil society organizations. Following this, the chapter discusses the defects and shortcomings of these approaches represented in dealing with Cairo’s informal settlements as just inadequate housing challenge and neglecting both of the economic component and community participation process within the development strategies. The chapter, then, explores the definition of KBUD, and investigates the theoretical framework of KBUD, and indicates clearly its domains and pillars. Following this, the existing opportunities and challenges related to KBUD in Cairo’s Informal Settlements are discussed and reframed. By the end, the chapter reaches some points to be put into consideration when reframing KBUD