

# Living and Sustainability: An Environmental Critique of Design and Building Practices, Locally and Globally

**1. Paper / Proposal Title:**

The Parallel City

**2. Format:**

*Written paper / verbal presentation / screening / other – please specify*

Written paper with graphics

**3. Author(s) Name:**

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**4. University or Company Affiliation:**

University of Toronto – Perkins+Will Inc.

**5. Abstract (300 words):**

The Parallel City is a Master's Thesis introducing an initiative to investigate the relation between formal and informal fragments of a city. In particular the focus was on Cairo, Egypt. Currently informal settlements are rapidly evolving with no prescribed planning, proper design, or legal guidelines. They are the normal progression of the continuous disregard of the demands of the informal settlement dwellers to have a proper human life with basic human needs. The difficulties that settlement dwellers face are interconnected on multiple levels in areas such as economics, health, and socio-cultural issues. Despite these difficulties, there are many opportunities that can be

unearthed or better utilized to achieve stronger links between the formal and the informal city. Formality and informality cannot be approached without understanding the economic activity of both. The objective with this thesis was to provide a sustainable livelihood system for informal settlement dwellers and enhance the image of their neighbourhoods in order to create a welcoming and inviting environment. The thesis proposed this can be achieved by creating an urban design configuration that acts as a connecting component that will favor market networks and entrepreneurship. However, this intervention will only work best by engaging other dimensions through participatory upgrading i.e. Human Capital, Social Capital, Physical Capital, and Natural Capital. This thesis recommends a design initiative to handle the growing density of unplanned areas and to spread awareness on how urban design can empower communities. A framework for intervention is divided into three consecutive stages: upgrading accessibility, redeveloping the business network, and anticipating the growth of the in-between spaces.

First the Upgrading is concerned with: reconnecting the neighborhood by providing a proper street network and transportation services, servicing the neighborhood with the basic infrastructure needed like water supply, sewage, power, gas, and lastly is the improving of the open public spaces. This will lead to: healthier living conditions, increase security and safety levels, and allow for businesses to thrive.

Second is the Redevelopment, concerned with: consolidate existing economic market, and encourage the increase of entrepreneurship programs. This will lead to: increasing job opportunities for women and youth, enhance living condition, increase income levels, and eliminate violence among youth.

The last stage is Growth, concerned with: Urban renewal of existing built form, and looking at better ways to formalize areas that are earmarked for future growth. Starting with two spinal urban cores that will be the stepping stone to expand the vision to include the wider scale of the settlement.

## **6. Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Shaimaa A. Tantawy is an Egyptian Urban Designer, who is currently working at Perkin+Will Inc. Toronto Office. She moved to Canada in 2013 to pursue her Master's degree in urban design at one of the top universities in North America, University of Toronto. She graduated from the Masters of Urban Design program at the Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design (MUD 15'), and she also holds a Bachelor degree in Architecture and a Post-Grad Diploma in Urban Planning and Design from Ain Shams University(2008) . She was the recipients of the Heather M. Reisman Gold medal in Design which is awarded to the top thesis project from a graduating student/students. She was fortunate to get to present the thesis after

graduation to the former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations and founder of the Stephen Lewis Foundation.