

Abstract

Mohamed H Salem

Becoming Place: Events in the Vicinity of Iconic Mosques in Old City of Cairo

A place is a space with distinct character. The dialogue between existing physical qualities in the cultural context and the needs and values of existing users is what creates this character. This dialogue generates transformations that are tied to activities related to certain events during different times. The changes witnessed throughout the year are an essential input of the spatial experience and the transformations of spaces to places. The result of these changes is a new urban image. The research explores the sense of place around mosques in the old city of Cairo. Throughout the year makeovers take place around iconic mosques. This thesis explores the aspects that play a role in the transformations that take place in the vicinity of al-Husayn and al-Sayyida Zaynab mosques. The physical form of the spaces around the mosques appears rigid. People actions, their activities and the changes in the physical conditions are what change a "loose space" in its abstract form into becoming a place. The study focuses on the physical aspects of al-Husayn and al-Sayyida Zaynab Mosques surrounding spaces and the changes occurring during the mawlid events. The research is conducted through observation, description and analysis of the scene and the activities that take place in the spaces during the mawlid. The field study describes and analyzes the space in its abstract form and during mawlid. Observations are analyzed through maps and sketches of the actual physical setting. The data is qualitatively analyzed through key ideas that were extracted from the documentation of the case studies. The ideas are diffusion, enclosure and flexibility. Finally, different themes are extracted from the analysis. In its conclusion, the thesis discusses and relates the findings of the study to theories of "found space", "loose space", and "place making".