

Cairo Downtown Passages Workshop: Design Brief

Context (See Appendix I: Project overview)

This workshop aims at addressing one of the most contentious issues facing public space in Cairo and many other Egyptian cities—that is the blurred interface between public and private spheres. The workshop will use Kodak and Philips passages as case studies, to highlight the different conditions, and solicit design proposals for each. For this, two adjacent and interlinked passageways exemplifying a typical commercial/mixed use passage (Philips passage) and a less frequented and relatively well-maintained urban pocket (Kodak passage) have been selected.

The workshop will follow a short, intensive design charrette format, including focused site visits, brainstorming and conceptualization sessions, and the development of design and presentation material. Participants will consist of 4-5 Egyptian artists and architects working in collaboration with 4 Danish artists and architects.

CLUSTER has been working in the two passages over an extended period, and undertaking mapping, interviews and outreach (as well as a recent renovation and exhibition in spaces adjacent to one of the passageways). CLUSTER will act as a partner to the design teams, providing research and background information as well as feedback on concepts. CLUSTER will oversee the implementation of selected schemes in the passageways, revising concepts into schemes based on community and jury feedback, negotiating permit and authorities approval, and producing tender and construction documents.

Site (See Appendices IIa and IIb: Kodak and Philips Passage Photographs)

Philips Passageway:

Philips Passageway is an L-shaped in-between setback located at the corner of, and connecting Sherief and Adly Streets. The Philips Passageway offers an opportunity to engage the diverse activities and a mix of retail, food, entertainment and service uses. It suffers from the chronic, but typical encroachment on public domain by shops and street vendors. The Philips Passageway also occupies a unique setting between privately owned property (partly by Ismaelia for Real-Estate Investments) and public access, pedestrian traffic amenities and infrastructure.

Kodak Passageway:

Kodak Passageway is a linear space flanked by a U-shape building that is mostly empty since most of the shops surrounding it are either empty or have very low profile clients. The indoor spaces around it offer an opportunity for art and cultural programs that may potentially spill over the passage integrating all premises and engaging these programs with wider public.

Structure and schedule: April 27-30 (See Appendix III: Workshop schedule)

The 4-day charrette is organized into three parts:

- Introduction, orientation and set-up (day one)
Including presentation by CLUSTER team to the project's context, goals, structure and expected outcome. Orientation includes a tour of downtown passageways. The day concludes with settling into the four teams into the studio space. A graduate student/junior architect will be shadowing each group for technical support and access to local context.
- Working sessions in separate teams (days 2,3 and 4)
Two full days are designated to an intensive design charrette through field research, brainstorming and design proposals. Each team is free to organize their time and structure their working sessions. CLUSTER team will be available for feedback. Each team will be provided with basic materials and supplies and a designated workspace overlooking one of the two passageways. The third day teams will have the morning to complete final presentations before the jury and public presentation begins in the afternoon.
- Jury review and public presentation (day 4)
The last day of the workshop will be designated to present the work of the four teams to the public and local stakeholders. A jury will also be involved in the assessment and selection of the proposed schemes. Based on technical, budgetary criteria, institutional regulations, as well as public feedback, one concept for each passageway will be selected for implementation within the available budget. CLUSTER will be responsible for translating the winning concepts into implementable drawings, acquiring necessary approvals, and overseeing the construction process.

Program and Guidelines (See Appendix IV: Summary of stakeholder analysis)

CLUSTER has developed a three-tier strategy to engage stakeholders for both passageways over the past two months: a) Engaging authorities on their own terms (Cairo Governorate and NOUH); b) interviews with residents and shop-owners in each passage; and c) holding focus groups discussion with visionaries for Downtown's future development at large. The feedback and input should inform the proposed design interventions within two basic parameters:

1. Immediate needs, concerns and aspirations by local stakeholders living, working and/or using these passageways. CLUSTER has conducted multiple research, interviews and meetings with many of these stakeholders. The outcome of this analysis is summarized in Appendix IV.

2. Broader contextual issues and **visions for Downtown** at large, including the following main principles.
 - Contribute to the development and revitalization of Downtown
 - Promote visibility, accessibility and safety
 - Foster diversity of users and encourage mixed use
 - Critically engage the blurred public-private boundary
 - Address the formal-informal interface

Budget

The project has a limited budget for each passage of EGP100,000, all inclusive.¹ Design teams should work within the above budget. The evaluation of the winning schemes will be in part based on their constructability within a realistic budget and availability of materials and skills in the local market. Egyptian team members should offer local knowledge to their team partners, and CLUSTER will be present as a partner in the process.

Permits and codes (See Appendix V*)

The passageways fall into distinct domains of ownership, hence jurisdiction and approval processes. Kodak Passage being a former street is considered a public space. Philips Passage is an alleyway resulting from the subdivision of a former large plot, hence the jurisdiction over any intervention falls between the two adjacent properties.

The two main authorities granting approval for any intervention include:

1. Cairo Governorate, under the Law 140, 1956 governing interventions in public space
2. National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH), under Law 119, 2008 for Khedival (Downtown) Cairo including: a) Guidelines for Heritage Zones; b) Guidelines for City Center; c) Guidelines, Guidelines for Open and Green Spaces; and d) Guidelines for Signage and Billboards.

*Note the appendix is largely in Arabic: local team members are encouraged to provide translation as necessary for relevant portions

Scope

1. A concept approach to the passageways that addresses the above needs and aspirations of local stakeholders within the broader vision of Downtown development and regeneration
2. Detailed intervention(s) translating the above concept into tangible, specific and potentially permanent design propositions

¹ This number includes materials, labor and transportation cost in addition to any fees required for issuance of permit or other approval by authorities.

Material to be provided for participants:

- Contextual map of downtown passageways 1:2000
- Site plan and section 1:500
- CAD file and 3D digital model
- Physical model (1:50) for each passageway to be shared by all groups

Deliverables

- Concept statement, visuals and diagrams
- Layout/plan + cross section 1:50
- Necessary details to illustrate the concept
- Volumetric expression (collage, 3D model, axonometric, etc.)

Presentation format (See Appendix VI)

Two panels 90x150 cm

Contextual model 1:50

Detailed model: scale TBD

Jury

Evaluation criteria

Both the public presentations and jury review aim at evaluating the best and most constructible concepts among the entries, either by selecting one integrated scheme or through combining the most successful design ideas from different schemes. The main criteria for evaluation include:

1. Addresses the designated goals and responds to stakeholders feedback
2. Develops a coherent concept, innovative design and grounded intervention
3. Is integrated within local context: physical setting, and social/political context
4. Works within budget and realistic implementation framework