Politics and Space in the Cairo Peri-Urban Fringe
A Study on Political Mobilisation

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Abstract

The subject of this study is local politics in Cairo's peri-urban fringe in the Mubarak era (1981-2011). It aims to propose a new theoretical model for understanding the social dynamics at a local level that have led to a specific form of socio-political mobilization, in which politicizing social space has been central. Each chapter in this study is based on the premise that Cairo's peri-urban fringe during the Mubarak era witnessed the rise of a dominant cognitive structure that has been responsible for shaping most of the collective political practices of local social agents. This cognitive structure has placed the representation of social space at the foreground of political representation. I call this cognitive structure 'neighbourhoodism'. Through neighbourhoodism, social agents have been able to translate their social, cultural and symbolic capitals into political capital, thereby qualifying themselves to be locally recognized as political representatives.

As this study will show, nearly all social agents in Cairo's peri-urban fringe who sought to play a role in local politics were involved in politicizing their social spaces, at least at one stage in their political life. Those agents were from different ideological and cultural backgrounds. They encompassed actors from the local NDP, Islamists and other local figures. However, the constructing of neighbourhoodism did not happen overnight. It was an outcome of sustained social practices, individual and collective, formal and informal, which eventually resulted in an intense competition over the representation of social spaces. Although neighbourhoodism first emerged in the late 1970s, it came to dominate the political field from the late 1980s. Local communities in Cairo's peri-urban fringe experienced an

intense struggle between social agencies, who tried to protect their positions and acquire recognition by developing strategies that involved symbolic violence.

Neighbourhoodism has pervaded most social groups and has led to differing cultural and ideological outcomes. Firstly, it has provided the autocratic regime with new means of control, enabling it to make clientelism more efficient and rational. Secondly, it has created a basis for the rise of new movements, most importantly the Islamic movement, by allowing it to cultivate allies from different sectors of society. Furthermore, it has motivated local groups to produce new strategies, such as clannism, in order to consolidate their position in the battle for recognition. Moreover, it gave local groups sufficient grounds to confront the state in times of conflict.

The contribution of this work is to intellectually capture a social medium where the interaction between the macro and the micro can be examined to show how the local and the national/ global interact to produce localized politics, or how the local is localizing the national and vice versa.

Introduction

Politics and Space in the Cairo Peri-Urban Fringe

The subject of this study is local politics in Cairo's peri-urban fringe in the Mubarak era. It aims to propose a new theoretical model for understanding the social dynamics at a local level that have led to a specific form of socio-political mobilization, in which local space has been central. Each chapter in this study is based on the premise that Cairo's peri-urban fringe in the Mubarak era witnessed the rise of a dominant cognitive structure that has been responsible for shaping most of the collective political practices of local social agents. This cognitive structure has placed the representation of social spaces at the foreground of political representation. I call this cognitive structure 'neighbourhoodism'. Through neighbourhoodism, social agents have been able to translate their social, cultural and symbolic capitals into political capital, thereby qualifying themselves to be locally recognized as political representatives.

One of the problems that faces researchers who want to explore the socio-political dynamics of Cairo's peripheries is the lack of a solid and reliable academic literature. In general, studies have been restricted to the broader dynamics of society or the transformations in the political order of the state. A number of important ethnographic studies have emerged in the last three decades, but these have been restricted to urban quarters and neighbourhoods in central Cairo. By contrast, the small cities, towns, villages and other settlements in Cairo's peri-urban fringe have rarely attracted the attention of researchers, despite the fact that they are absorbing a significant proportion of Cairo's population growth, house the majority of the city's inhabitants, and represent, according to David Sims, in "a real way, the future of the city" (Sims, 2010, p. 270).

Furthermore, since the mid-1990s many of the towns in Cairo's peri-urban frontier have witnessed conflicts, violent clashes, and Islamic insurgencies that have pitted sectors of local communities against the state. The Egyptian security agencies, in the 1990s, launched one of their largest ever campaigns against Jihadists and Islamists in response to attacks that targeted the state's institutions as well as tourist facilities. Districts in Cairo's peri-urban fringe such as Imbaba, Kerdasa, Nahia, Saft al-laban and al-Materia were targeted, alongside other cities and towns in Upper Egypt. One consequence of the neglect of Cairo's peri-urban frontier by researchers was its failure to predict the new generation of social movements that shaped the political arena following the January 25 Revolution. In the period that followed the toppling of Mubarak, most political observers were shocked to witness the emergence of new political elites as though out of nowhere. The truth, however, was that they had made little attempt to understand what was going on outside the political centre of Cairo, leaving large sectors of the population who lived in the outskirts to define politics in their own terms.

This work is based on field research in the City of Kerdasa, which is located 8 km to the south-west of Giza City in Greater Cairo. My research and its conclusions are based on information collected from a variety of sources, the most important being a series of in-depth interviews. Some of these fieldwork interviews were conducted in December 2012 in Kerdasa, and in October 2013 in Doha (through VoIP applications), but most of the other interviews were held between March 2016 and January 2017 in Kerdasa and Khartoum (remotely), and personally in Istanbul, to which many Kerdasians had fled after the bloody clashes that took place in August 2013, when the local police station was attacked by armed assailants in response to the breakup of the Rabeaa Adawiya and Nahda protest camps. Furthermore, many interviews were undertaken in Kerdasa through a research assistant.

During that relatively long period, I had the opportunity to investigate a number of different aspects of local politics in the town. I interviewed townspeople and local figures with differing ideological backgrounds, which enabled me to examine the evolution of local political elites from contrasting angles. However, due to the political situation in the country after the military coup, I was unable to participate in the fieldwork in Kerdasa personally. As an alternative, I worked with research assistants who, through their local experience and connections, were able to collect most of the data. Firstly, I employed Hussain Saleh Omar, a legal researcher, who belongs to one of the biggest families in Kerdasa and was an active member in the Popular Committee after the revolution. Hussain has been a partner in my research journey. He was my gateway to obtaining a great deal of knowledge about Kerdasa's history, social ecology, families, local elites and its politics. Through his network of connections, I was able to interview a variety of local figures from different political and social backgrounds. Furthermore, his knowledge of Egyptian law helped me to understand the way in which the Egyptian system of local governance operates. On a number of occasions, when I was unable personally to conduct interviews, Hussain acted as a substitute for me. Now at the conclusion of my research into Kerdasa's politics, I can see that even if I had been able to conduct my fieldwork in person under 'normal' conditions, I would nevertheless have needed the assistance of someone like Hussain to facilitate my research.

At a later stage, in November 2016, Sherif Mohyideen also joined me in my research journey. Sherif is a well-trained researcher who has worked for many years in the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights. Over a two-month period, Sherif helped me to tackle one of the most difficult challenges in my research. He was able to contact and interview many of the local figureheads of the National Democratic Party in Kerdasa. Prior to this, I had

managed to conduct some interviews with these figures through proxies, but I could not gain their trust. It is inevitable that in an extremely sensitive political situation, any stranger who asks questions that may have political consequences will be treated with suspicion. Sherif was able to fill that gap, providing me with detailed answers to most of my questions.

This work could not have been possible without the support of many people. First and foremost, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, which funded and supported my doctoral journey. I also owe Abdul Raufu Mustapha, who accepted to supervise me when I first came to Oxford, a great deal of gratitude. His untimely death deeply saddened me, and I wish he would have been able to see the final product that would not have been possible without his kindness, support and feedback at the beginning of my journey.

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1

SPACE AND POLITICS IN CAIRO'S PERI-URBAN FRINGE: A STUDY IN POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

This study is about the evolution of socio-political mobilization in the Cairo peri-urban frontier in the era of Mubarak (1981-2011). It aims to uncover the logic behind local political engagements and the forms of representation that local communities manifested in response to state policies. It also attempts to comprehend the interaction between the micro and the macro levels, or between the local and the national, and the ways in which both levels feed into each other, leading to the rise of localized politics. This thesis is also a study of the evolution of local political elites during these three decades. It tries to propose a theoretical basis that can make sense of their behaviours, struggles, forms of mobilization, generational conflicts, and their attitudes towards the state and their localities.

The main contention of this study is that the relationship between local communities and the Egyptian state in the Greater Cairo peri-urban fringe, from the late 1970s, cannot be understood without taking into account the rise of a new 'cognitive structure', one that allowed the emergence of new forms of socio-political mobilization, which motivated local residents to take political actions. I call this new cognitive structure 'neighbourhoodism', which is a habitus that made social spaces the subject of socio-political mobilization, raising awareness of 'localness' and driving social forces to act on its basis. Since the emergence of 'neighbourhoodism' in the late 1970s, towns, villages and neighborhoods in this region have been subjected to various kinds of objectification and redefinition, which has made the social

space central to local struggles. This tendency has pervaded most social groups and has led to differing cultural and ideological outcomes. Firstly, it has provided the autocratic regime with new means of control, enabling it to make clientelism more efficient and rational. Secondly, it has created a basis for the rise of new movements, most importantly the Islamic movement, by allowing it to cultivate allies from different sectors of society. Furthermore, it has motivated local groups to produce new strategies, such as clannism, in order to consolidate their position in the battle for recognition. Moreover, it gave local groups sufficient grounds to confront the state in times of conflict.

This study is based on extensive research in Kerdasa, a town located in the south-west of the Giza governorate in Greater Cairo. My discussions and conclusions are based on information collected from a variety of sources, such as studies, media reports, and most importantly the in-depth interviews that I have undertaken. The fieldwork interviews were conducted in December 2012 in Kerdasa and October 2013 in Doha, but most of the other interviews were held between March 2016 and January 2017 in Istanbul and Khartoum, to which many of Kerdasa's elites fled after the military coup in July 2013 and after the events in Kerdasa of September 2013. During that relatively long period, I had the chance to investigate a number of different aspects of local politics in the town. I interviewed townspeople and local figures with differing ideological backgrounds, which enabled me to examine the evolution of local political elites from contrasting angles. Due to the complexity of researching the 'local', and because studying local elites involves an examination of multiple variables, the chapters of the dissertation each contain arguments and theoretical premises that are built upon a broad range of literature. However, this first chapter importantly clarifies the general contribution and argument of this study as well as the central concepts and theories used in analysis.

Hence, the aims of this chapter are threefold. Firstly, I wish to outline and to synthesize the arguments of the subsequent four chapters in this thesis, to propose a critical framework for explaining the changing patterns of socio-political mobilizations at the local level. The main conclusions and observations of this study will be situated within a broader discussion of related literature that can help us to identify essential concepts in studying the socio-political mobility of local communities in Egypt. This will also highlight the critical concepts, themes, theories and methodologies that are brought to bear in this study. This chapter, secondly, will cast light on the methodology used to study the political mobilization in local settings, suggesting the necessity to assume a "social medium" where the micro and the macro interact and where politics can be identified and recognized in its local settings.

The third aim of this chapter is to offer a brief but critical account of the social background of the Cairo peri-urban fringe. This will involve an attempt to understand the emergence of neo-localism in spite of the highly centralized nature of the state. It will also clarify why studying the communities around the city of Cairo is important.

1.1 A Critical Framework for Studying Socio-Political Mobilization in Egypt

This work is concerned with understanding the socio-political mobilization of local communities in Greater Cairo's peri-urban fringe in the Mubarak era. This region, which extends north and south of Greater Cairo, has witnessed several clashes between the state and local communities over the last three decades, and has been targeted and stigmatized by official discourses as a stronghold of crime and terrorism for reasons will be elaborated later in this chapter.

With respect to local communities in Greater Cairo, recent scholarship has tended to understand their socio-political antinomies as a consequence of the process of urbanization which took place through the second half of the twentieth century. These studies form a contrast with the scholarship that was prevalent prior to the mid-1980s, which was more drawn towards studying Cairene society in terms of the classic categorizations of social strata (urban-rural, working class-bourgeois, upper middle-class-lower middle-class, etc.).

The logic behind the shift towards urbanization studies can be traced back to the impact that globalization and integration into the global economy have had on societies in developing countries, where cities have emerged as 'nodes' serving what Sassen terms a "transnational urban system" (Sassen, 2000, 2007). In the "informational age", according to Manuel Castells, metropolitan areas have transformed the old social inequalities and reproduced them into "spatial hierarchies", resulting in new urban movements that cut across social classes by asserting new identities. (Castells, 2002)

This study's theoretical framework intends to establish methodological premises and analytical tools that will enable us to understand socio-political mobilizations in the Cairo peri-urban fringe and the evolution of its political elites. The following sections will firstly offer a historical background to the development of urban sociology. Secondly, they will discuss the need to utilize concepts and theories from contemporary social theory in order to understand the impact of the process of urbanization. Lastly, they will establish the conceptual framework that will be employed in this study.

1.1.1 From the Rise of the Urban Question to Neo-Localism

In the wake of Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of social space, the social sciences have increasingly been aware of space as an integral aspect of social practice rather than an a priori concept. Both time and space were conceived as a result and precondition of the production of society and were held to be socially constructed. (Schmid, 2008, p. 29) Lefebvre examined space from the viewpoint of three dimensions. Firstly, spatial practice, or perceived space, which is the way that society interacts with lived spaces. Secondly, conceived space, or representations of space, which refers to the formal discourse that is produced by social and political power to guarantee the control of the dominant classes over the space. Lastly, there is lived space, which incorporates the coexistence and interaction of the first two dimensions of space (Abrams and Bulmer, 1986). The last dimension encompasses struggles between spatial representations that reflect conflicts over production and over urbanization. The power of Late Capitalism, according to Lefebvre, lies in its ability to produce an "abstract space".(Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 92–3)

Urban Theory has since become central to understanding social movements as forms of protest that seek to reshape and re-interpret social space. According to Castells, 'urban social movements' refers to any urban-oriented mobilization that aims to "influence structural social change and transforms the urban meaning"(Mayer, 2018, p. 739). The rise of the urban question was due to major developments that took place globally in the first half of the twentieth century. Firstly, the fading of the urban-rural divide, which was replaced by diverse new polarizations inside cities (Harvey, 2014, pp. 12–3). Secondly, the decline of the political significance of social classes with the rise of the welfare state (Clark et al., 1993) and Late Capitalism's ability to reconfigure the technological and organizational

arrangements underlying the production system, “by big shifts in the geographic outlines of economic development”. (Scott, 2012, p. 175) Consequently, other aspects of social antagonism came to the fore, “reflecting the divisions of race and gender, the impact of citizenship, the distribution of political power, and the actions of elites”. (Pakulski, 2005, p. 153)

From the 1970s, the new field of globalization studies undertook a shift in studying urbanization. World cities could no longer be conceived, as in the Weberian approach, as “incomplete integrated local societies” (May, 2005, p. 361), nor as an arena for the anonymity and impersonality of urban exchange (Simmel, 1969, p. 49,59), or as the rejection of local cultures (or ‘subjective cultures’, in Georg Simmel’s phrase). [1] Hence, in tandem with the global integration thesis, a wave of sociological and cultural studies stressed the role of urbanization in intensifying neo-localism: the reinvention of local cultural identities and traditions based on ethnic, social, spatial or religious elements held in common. Tighter integration meant the proliferation of asserted differences. Local groups perceived global influences on aspects of local life to be an attack, leading them to search for a refuge in their localities from the unsettling confusion of the larger world. This led more groups to embrace their local culture and lifestyle as a political choice (Schuerkens, 2003, pp. 217–8).

On the other hand, the evolving nature of urban issues during the second half of the twentieth century led also to the rise of interdisciplinary studies of the city, fragmenting urban

[1] Ibid, p.59. The West, of course, had witnessed this shift earlier in the twentieth century, when much of the world remained in a quasi-segmental state, and varying forms of traditionalism persisted. (Beck et al., 1994, p. 96).

sociology into several fields, which placed social theories in the centre of urban sociology (May, 2005, p. 348). A wide range of studies and analyses have proposed alternative approaches that involve conceptions taken from Practice Theory, which allows a moving of "the level of sociological attention 'down' from conscious ideas and values to the physical and the habitual. But this move is complemented by a move 'up,' from ideas located in individual consciousness to the impersonal arena of 'discourse.'" (Swidler, 2001, p. 84). This approach has provided urban sociologists with new perspectives from which to study cities at both macro and micro levels. This study will also adopt such an approach. Based on this methodology, the next section will propose a conceptual framework that will help us to clarify the subject of this study.

1.1.2 The Turn to Practice in the Social Sciences: Giddens & Bourdieu

This section aims to address selected concepts and analytical tools from contemporary social theory that will enrich our understanding of socio-political mobilization in urban settings. It will attempt to extract elements from Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice, namely his conceptions of *habitus* and *field*, and from Anthony Giddens's Theory of Structuration, namely his conception of *medium*, adapting them in order to understand the motivations that drive the social agencies considered in this study.

Before approaching these theories, it is worth mentioning that the 'turn to practice' from the mid-1970s has revolutionized methodological approaches in social sciences, since it revealed a "distinct image of science from the received view" (Bourdieu, 2004, pp. 1–31; Soler et al., 2014, p. 13). This turn began when a new wave of theorists, such as Bourdieu, Giddens, Foucault and Sahlins, adopted a loosely defined "practice approach" that opposed

the then-dominant schools of sociology such as functionalism (e.g. Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons), structuralism (e.g. Claude Lévi-Strauss, Ferdinand de Saussure and Louis Althusser), and 'spontaneous sociology'. Practice theorists sought a "virtuous middle path between the excesses of methodological individualism – explaining social phenomena as a result of individual actions – and those of its logical opposite, methodological holism – the explanation of phenomena by means of structures or social wholes" (Bräuchler and Postill, 2010, p. 6).

According to Giddens, both structuralism and functionalism strongly emphasized the pre-eminence of the social whole over its social agents (Giddens, 1984, p. 1). He does not appeal, however, to the experience of the individual actor, nor to the existence of any form of social totality, but instead calls on us to consider "social practices ordered across space and time" (Giddens, 1984, p. 2). Human social activities are self-reproducing and recursive. They are not "brought into being by social actors but continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors. Through their activities, agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible (Giddens, 1984). In other words, 'turning to practice' questioned determinism in social theories and offered a middle way between individual actions and social structures.

1.1.2.1 Giddens

- *Medium*

Structures, according to Giddens' theory, should be conceived as the social *medium* of action as they provide, through memory, the bases upon which agents draw when they engage in social practices. Duality of structure and agency, thus, requires twofold analyses. On the one

hand, social action is shaped by this *medium* and on the other hand *mediums* are also the outcome of agents' practices (Cassell, 1993, p. 122). Structure should not to be conceptualized as a barrier to action, but as essentially involved in its production. In tandem, while social practices are mainly an output of the structure, they are also involved in the process of structuration. (Cassell, 1993, pp. 124–5)

1.1.2.2 Bourdieu

In his article 'Social Space and Symbolic Power', Bourdieu characterized his work as *constructivist structuralism* or *structuralist constructivism*. By structuralism or structuralist, he meant that there "exist, within the social world itself [...] objective structures independent of the consciousness and will of agents, which are capable of guiding and constraining their practices or their representations" (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 14). By constructivism, he meant that there is a twofold genesis for social reality. Firstly, the "schemes of perception", thought and action, which are constitutive of habitus. Secondly, there are 'fields', which are constitutive of social space (Bourdieu, 1989). In his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Bourdieu created an analytical model that can capture the dialectical relationship between agency and structure, whose key concepts are: habitus, field, strategy, capital(s) and symbolic violence.

- *Habitus*

According to Bourdieu habitus is:

> "a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class constituting the precondition for all objectification and apperception" (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 183). It is not only a "structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes

> which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes". *(Bourdieu, 2010, p. 166)*

Through habitus, social agents perceive and understand their social surroundings. In summary, habitus functions in the following ways:

1) Habitus is a product of the "internalization of structures". It reflects objective divisions in social space, such as social inequalities, gender relations, etc. It is acquired as a result of the long-term occupation of a position within the social world (Ritzer, 2011, pp. 530–2). Habitus is "embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history - is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 56).
2) Habitus can be a collective phenomenon, but the existence of a "multitude of habitus means that the social world and its structures do not impose themselves uniformly on all actors" (Ritzer, 2011). Habitus is transferable from one field to another. It "produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. ibid).
3) Although habitus shapes practice and constrains thought and choice of action, it does not determine them. It merely "suggests" social actions, thoughts and awareness, providing the principles by which people cultivate the strategies that they will employ in the social world. (Ritzer, 2011)
4) Habitus is responsible for constituting the "logic of practice" and "common sense". These logics are not fixed but rather adapted by social agencies who are constantly changing in the face of contradictory situations. Habitus constitutes agencies'

subconscious and manifests itself in social practices (Ritzer, 2011), ensuring "the 'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time". (Bourdieu, 1992, p. ibid).

5) Hence, habitus can emancipate analyses from determinism (Bourdieu, 1992, p. ibid), allowing polythetic approaches that capable of capturing "simultaneously a multiplicity of confused and contradictory meanings because the overriding context". (Ritzer, 2011)

- *Field, Position, Strategy, Capital(s) and Symbolic Violence*

What also distinguishes Bourdieu's conception of social space is that it is relational rather than structural. This is why it is also important to consider his concept of field, which often replaces 'social structure' in his writings:

1) Social space is made up of fields. The field is a network of relations between the occupants of positions (individuals or institutions). Each field has its own logic that generates among occupants of positions a belief about social actions and relations in the field. The field is a "type of competitive marketplace in which various kinds of capital (economic, cultural, social, symbolic) are employed and deployed". (Ritzer, 2011)
2) Occupants of positions within the field employ a variety of strategies. Strategy is also a critical concept, which Bourdieu refers to it as "the product of a practical sense, of a particular social game. This sense is acquired beginning in childhood, through participation in social activities." (Author et al., 1986, p. 112). By strategies, social agents, individually or collectively, defend their positions, imposing principles of hierarchization that favour them (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 101).

3) Social agents can be involved in several fields at the same time. Their positions inside the field differ from time to time, depending on social conditions, the intensity of competition and their ability to manoeuvre by strategies to acquire "recognition". (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 101)
4) Strategy involves symbolic violence, which is the most basic weapon of social agents inside a field. It is the violence which is "exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 101). It is usually based on one or more forms of capital. Capital can be political, social, cultural and symbolic. Each capital is acquired differently and can be applied to certain fields. Conversion between them is possible depending on different factors, but sometimes it could be costly. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 253)
5) The concept of field shows the complexity of social reality and the leeway that can be enjoyed by social actors especially if they have the chance to be strong in more than one field. While social actors might be invisible in a certain field, they might also occupy an advanced position in another. The field also teaches us the difficulty of predicting or estimating the power of agencies, since the accumulation of capital is possible from endless fields and researchers are barely able to scrutinize power relations inside one field.
6) Finally, Bourdieu's sociology calls on sociologists to become a part of the subject that they are studying. Participants should be both a subject and an object and reflecting it on the subject of the research and themselves. He called this process "participant objectivation" (Bourdieu, 2003). Elsewhere, however, he admitted that

this process led him to an "impossible situation" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 68).

Section 1.3 will utilize this framework. I will try to identify the habitus of the political field in the Cairo peri-urban fringe in the era of Mubarak, following the logic of its rise over two decades to become a medium that has shaped the social practices of local social agents. Before that, however, the following section will justify adopting this framework, showing how it will contribute in understanding political mobilization on the local level. This will be done through engaging with the dominant academic schools that examined socio-political mobilization in Egypt.

1.2 The Contemporary Approach Towards Socio-Political Mobilization in Egypt

In the 1950s and 1960s, there was a tendency in academic research to focus on the socio-cultural and economic impact of the huge influx from the countryside (Upper Egypt and Delta) to the cities. During this period, rural migrants' adaption to city-life was central to the study of social practices and societal resistance as well. This was perhaps because most new ruling elites in Egypt, and other countries in the Middle East, were derived from rural origins (Batatu, 1984). It was assumed, therefore, that populist regimes in that era were creating new stable middle classes "without which the rulers cannot rule".[2] Thus, the rural middle class was to be the new social base for the political order, or at least in alliance with it (Ansari,

[2] Leonard Binder, for example, argues that the Egyptian rural middle class "was able to capture the support of the Egyptian masses" after the fall of the royal regime. The July 1952 revolution, according to Binder, left the rural middle class in "virtually undisputed dominance". Binder, as a result, points out that the Egyptian rural middle class was the stratum "without which the rulers cannot rule". (Binder, 1978, p. 20,26)

1986, p. 233). Urban sociologists attempted to understand the forms of socio-cultural mobilization that were taking place in Egyptian cities through an approach that combined an urban-rural dichotomy with class analysis.[3] A vast number of research papers were written at this time which sought to describe the hybrid newly-born suburbs, where rural migrants had tried to transform their quarters into village-like communities (Abu-Lughod, 1961, 1971, pp. 198–200), and recorded conflicts in newly urbanized villages between villagers and "newcomers" or "outsiders" (Taher, 1986). An instructive debate, consequently, revolved around whether migrants were becoming absorbed into the urbanization process, or whether their original village culture was actually penetrating the city, entailing a 'ruralization of cities'. (Barakat, 1993, pp. 65–70; Gulick, 1969, pp. 122–158; Pappé, 2013, pp. 99–100)

Around the mid-1980s, this debate began to fade because those who had been called migrants had since become fully integrated, and their sons and grandsons had been born in cities. The number of new migrants from the countryside had declined to almost zero (Sims, 2010, p. 32). Hence, the urban-rural dichotomy has since been replaced by an emphasis on diverse new forms of polarization inside cities.[4] Within this context, a new wave of enquiries began in the early 1990s, which examined the new forms of socio-cultural struggle in Egypt's urban settings. In short, academic research has made a 'turn to practice' and the sociology of the everyday life. Large case-studies have been produced in last three decades that have focused on everyday life in Cairo's urban quarters, neighbourhoods, workshops, markets, and even

[3] Ansari's book is a good example of this tendency. Ibid.

[4] The fading of the urban-rural divide has proceeded at a differential pace was not restricted to Egypt or the Middle East, this process of course was undergoing throughout the world as Henri Lefebvre had predicted (Harvey, 2014, pp. 12–3).

alleys (*harat*). Scholarship has examined various aspects of people's social organizations, formal and informal networks, credit associations (*gama'iyat*), family structures and daily habits, as well as masculinity and femininity.

The following chapter section aims to engage with academic research that has discussed socio-political practices in Egyptian urban settings, which have contributed to different kinds of socio-political mobilization, fundamentally shaping the relationship between the Egyptian state and society. This section will approach selected scholarship within a broad category: research on informality, mostly in Greater Cairo. This is a rich body of literature that has explored informal individual and collective social practices from various angles, from political economy to social movements. It also involves research into political clientelism, which has also been heavily utilized in attempts to understand political mobilization in Egypt. These approaches will be critically addressed in a way that shows their fruitful insights, on the one hand, and their limitations, on the other.

1.2.1 Research on Informality in Greater Cairo

Research on informality in Greater Cairo has mainly fallen into one of three broad categories. The first views informality from above, at the macro level, investigating how the state governs Cairo, and aiming to shed light on the interactions between different parts of the city. This approach studies the Cairene upper classes in their gated communities or satellite desert cities, and interprets their behaviour in terms of spatial hierarchy and social isolation, leaving behind the majority of people who live in suburbs with a poor quality of life and

overburdened infrastructure. Its aim is to explore how neoliberal urban policies have made Cairo subject to contestation and have driven millions of people into the informal sector.

The second category is concerned with investigating everyday politics in Cairo urban neighbourhoods and the "politics of conviviality" (Hinchliffe and Whatmore, 2006). Many neighbourhood case-studies have been produced in the last three decades that have explored the meaning of informality on the ground. They have suggested a new approach that considers the self-expressions of subalterns and the ways in which people organize themselves and develop new strategies of survival, negotiating with or evading the state in order to improve their living conditions or establish alternative forms of representation. Much effort has also gone towards documenting official surveillance, persecution and hostile discourse concerning the residents of popular (*sha'bi*) quarters. The third category is concerned with understanding power relations through the theory of neopatrimonialism. It aims to understand how informalization of the state has been mirrored in society, creating various tools of control based on clientelism.

These approaches seek to comprehend the socio-cultural transformations that accompany the urbanization process, which characterize the new urban movements in Egypt. The following sections will review selected studies from both approaches in order to extrapolate a definition of informality that can be used as an analytical concept.

1.2.1.1 Informality from Above

David Sims's *Understanding Cairo* is the most recent comprehensive study of Greater Cairo. From the early 1970s, according to Sims, two types of urbanization process have taken place in the Egyptian capital. The first is characterized by the state's efforts to expand planned

areas to accommodate increasing population, whether by allocation projects or by building new cities in the desert. This process has been beset by inefficiency and slowness. Furthermore, it has been frustrated by people's reluctance to follow the official plans for various reasons (Sims, 2010, p. 31).

The second process is spontaneous and *de facto* social urbanization, which has been driven by external imperatives, whether from urban centres into village agglomerations in the agricultural hinterland or through the emergence of "urban towns" (Ibid.). The latter, according to Sims, are "market towns and the loci of trade, small manufacturing, and services for the larger rural hinterlands, as well as the location for certain footloose enterprises" (Ibid.). It is the second process that has been considered officially 'informal', even though it dominates the pattern of urbanization and today accommodates 63% of the total inhabitants of Greater Cairo.[5]

Hence, the growth of Cairene society has tended to challenge governmental urban planning, demonstrating that "the life patterns and rhythms of people and other city dwellers are entangled with and against the grain of expert designs and blueprints" (Hinchliffe and Whatmore, 2006). In response, the official census still does not recognize vast newly-

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[5] Sims, p.92. According to Sims, a number of different factors have led to the flourishing of informal settlements in Greater Cairo in the second half of the twentieth century: 1- The rural influx to the cities. 2- The evacuation of some one million people from the Suez Canal zone during the War of Attrition with Israel (1967-1970). 3- The oil boom in 1970s, in which the savings and remittances of Egyptian migrants to the gulf led to an acceleration of housing construction in the informal city. 5- Egyptians in general prefer to subdivide their private agricultural land for economic reasons; 83% of informal settlements were found to be developed on what had been privately held agricultural land (Ibid, p.97.).

urbanized areas as urban, and instead considers them 'informal settlements' (*'ashwa'iat*), though these areas constitute about 40% of Greater Cairo's built-up area and could not be built without the state's toleration (Sims, 2010, p. 31). Moreover, these areas are also a home to many small- and medium-size enterprises, a "vast sector that generates most urban employment opportunities throughout Egypt as a whole", most of which are informal (Ibid., p.112). This situation has led Judson Dorman to argue that the Egyptian state's toleration of informality was deliberate. The Egyptian state has informalized Egyptian society in order to avoid any "bargaining and binding between rulers and ruled" (Dorman, 2007, p. 247). Informality reflects the state's weakness, its inability to transform society and its powerlessness to expand "the scope of [its] top-down social control", based on Joel Migdal's model of the modern state (Migdal, 1988). However, informality can also have benefits for authoritarian regimes, as it helps to supply the "clientelist lines" by which the regime guarantees its top-down control (Dorman, 2007, p. 247).

Informality, therefore, cannot be understood without acknowledging the political order in authoritarian regimes in which state-society relations are likely to be "characterized by a logic of neglectful rule, entailing state-society disengagement; patrimonialism and clientelism; and risk avoidance" (Dorman, 2007, p. 247). The state's disengagement offers the regime a kind of autonomy, an avoidance of bargaining with the ruled, and it sustains "informal spoils" for the regime's great patronage system.

Recent scholarship has started to become aware that the story of informality does not make sense without a parallel story of the informalization of the state itself. The old assumption that "the state is in one place, informality in another" (Elyachar, 2003, p. 576) was criticized in the Egyptian context in research published in the 2000s. Much work in this direction was

inspired by Castells and other structuralists, who see informality in general as subordinated to formality and therefore as a means for the dominators to reduce their costs. (Castells, 2002; Castells and Portes, 1989; Jütting et al., 2009)

To view the state as 'bifurcated' (i.e., that it has both a formal and informal nature) has become a dominant approach in studying informality in the Egyptian context today. Nevertheless, this approach has rested on three different premises: first, that the nature of the Egyptian state is likely to be non-interventionist and tends to rule large parts of society via intermediaries. The second approach is influenced by cultural studies. It views bifurcation as a legacy of the colonial administration, in which cities were divided into European and native quarters. This segregation has been implicitly adopted by the post-independence state, which has also assimilated the 'civilizing mission' and discourse of the colonial powers (Mitchell, 1991). Advocates of this approach claim that "discursive practices [of colonialism] operate not only between western colonial powers and their colonies but also within postcolonial states, as a sort of internal colonialism" (Singerman, 2009, p. 116). Such arguments are usually supported by an analysis of the discourses used by urbanist political elites to stigmatize and criminalize the inhabitants of informal settlements.[6]

The third premise has stressed the changed role of the state in the neoliberal age. Informality in this sense is a product of market expansion in order to integrate subalterns and their social networks and cultural practices. In Julia Elyachar's study of this tendency, the process of

[6] Examples of this direction in other countries can be viewed in: (Chatterjee, 2004; Mamdani, 1996; Nightingale, 2012).

"market practices" entails a rationalization of what does not belong to the market, creating a separation between economic activity and its socio-cultural value (Elyachar, 2003, p. 576). In Timothy Mitchell's *Rule of Experts*, informality is no more than a "fabrication" invented by neoliberalism to hide the fact that the market has its limits. Not everything can be translated into an exchangeable unit in a market; therefore, what stays "outside" the formal economy's "imagination" and its "representations" is likely to be informal. Informality in this view is the societal reluctance to the totality of economy (Mitchell, 2002, 2007).

In Egypt, the assessment of informality, in general and informal settlements, as chiefly an accompaniment to the process of neoliberalization is seductive. Leïla Vignal and Eric Denis have argued that Egyptian export-oriented policies from the late 1970s opened the way for Cairo to become a "global city" and to be integrated with "the archipelago of great metropolises" in the Arab World (Vignal and Denis, 2006). However, due to the low weight of Egypt on the international commercial and financial scene, as well as its lack of technological capacity, Cairo has nothing to offer except "its abundant and cheap manual labor" (Ibid., p.110).

Consequently, the metropolis has spatially concretized the increasing gap between an impoverished urban population and the tenants of the new, privatized, productive city. Functional centres are grouped into satellites and gated communities on Cairo's outskirts, embracing the upper-classes who have their own life-style[7] and who exploit millions of subproletarians, most of whom live in informal areas. The process of "metropolitanization"

[7] Insightful studies reflect and study the Egyptian upper class's life-style and transitional elites can be found in: (Peterson, 2011; Winegar and Abaza, 2009).

has “crashed” the urban space and produced new spatial hierarchies that guarantee metropolitan accumulation by making “a majority of its population, living at its center, subsist at a very low cost”. (Vignal and Denis, 2006)

In addition, several case studies have been produced that show the new urban forms that have emerged in Greater Cairo during the last two decades, such as industrial zones (Soliman, 1999) and gated cities. Informal suburbs here are often associated with the state’s withdrawal from society, leaving whole areas with an ambiguous status, one that allows these areas to “converge and to be integrated into the metropolitan matrix to such a degree that, at present, its illegality is itself put into question” (Vignal and Denis, 2006). Everything else can be easily explained as symptoms of the neoliberalization process. Gated communities and new rich suburbs can be understood as neoliberal crony clusters (Denis, 2006), a process of “walling some in and keeping others out” (Elsheshtawy, 2006), or in David Harvey’s words, “capitalism needs urbanization to absorb the surplus products it perpetually produces” (Harvey, 2014, p. 24). The stigmatization of the street and the media discourse against the inhabitants of informal settlements can be included in what has been called the “globalization of risk” and the need to privatize security (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2009, p. 34).

In summary, it is according to these premises (the state’s embeddedness in society, post-colonialism and neoliberalism) that informality is viewed from above in the Egyptian context. In the following section we will review how the literature has regarded informality from below.

1.2.1.2 Informality from Below

Another tendency of research since the early 1990s has been to suggest that informality can be viewed as an arena of societal resistance against the arbitrariness of the nation-state and the upper classes' domination. One of these studies has gone so far as to assume that the lower-classes' coping mechanisms in popular neighbourhoods (*ahya' sha'biya*), such as the consumption of subsidized goods and services, are a form of resistance to the "exclusionary policies" imposed by the state (Singerman, 1995, p. chapter 5). Others argue that "informal life" secures cultural and political autonomy outside the boundaries of the state and modern bureaucratic institutions, especially for those who try to escape modern life, because "not everyone can afford to be modern" (Bayat, 2009, p. 59).

This approach has examined informality in terms of socio-political practices. It attempts to understand the logic by which *sha'bi* quarters produce informal networks and social institutions to negotiate with the state or evade it. Every-day life sociologists in Egypt began to pay attention to informal socio-economic institutions in the late 1980s. This was due to the impact of migrants' remittances flows from the oil-based economy countries, which not only led to social investments in the informal sector (including informal housing), but also produced new forms of organization and business networks, based on religious and identity politics.

Much work has been done on the socio-economic manifestations of this phenomenon, such as Islamic investment companies, Islamic and Christian associations, as well as private voluntary organizations (Ayubi, 2003, pp. 148–50; Roussillon, 1998, pp. 375–376; Springborg, 1989, p. 225). It has been said that this sector, in the late 1980s and 1990s, was

able to compete with the state's welfare system and in some areas replace it (Sullivan, 1992, 1994). Other incidents, such as the insurgence of Islamic militants in *sha'bi* quarters, and the Muslim Brotherhood's electoral success in syndicates and unions (and later in the National Assembly) were associated with the growth of informality (Ayubi, 2003, p. 130).

These manifestations were also embodied in everyday life. Farha Ghannam argues that residents in *sha'bi* neighborhoods tend by their humble resources to transform their space to reflect their own socio-cultural agenda, against urbanization discourse. In her work, she investigates the state policies of forced relocation of thousands of families from a *sha'bi* area to public housing in the outskirts. Displaced residents were stigmatized and accused of hiding criminals during the 1977 riots. Therefore, public housing (al-Masakin al-Jadida) was designed architecturally to be exposed, and to force its inhabitants to live in a modern lifestyle. Nevertheless, relocated people have redesigned their space to guarantee autonomy, individuality and their cultural identity. They have also cultivated new public spheres (such as mosques) to help them to integrate in the wider local settings. Thus, they "manipulated space to evade attempts to discipline them and regulate their relationships and activities" (Ghannam, 2002). As a result, recreating space in Ghannam's inquiry is not only driven by imperatives; it also involves articulating local values, national policies, and global forces in social agents' daily struggles (Ibid., p. 177).

Salwa Ismail's research on Bulaq al-Dakrur has reached similar conclusions. Bulaqian young men, during the withdrawal of the welfare state, have appropriated street corners or workshop areas as safe and familiar spaces in order to produce a "territorialized identity" (Ismail, 2006a, p. 90). Ismail, however, suggests that the construction of masculinity, which has been provoked by the growing role of women as negotiators with the state, has filled the

gap. In another study, Ismail interprets the insurgence of the Islamic movement around Cairo as an organizational phase of this tendency: a spatial identity that reinscribes cultural practices aiming to maintain the moral order (Ismail, 2006b).

The underlying assumption of these studies is that informality in *sha'bi* quarters and *a'shwaiyat* enhances a kind of relative autonomy, in which people can be involved in a process of engagement and disengagement with the state in order to advance their positions. To what extent this kind of autonomy undermines the role of state or formal institutions and represents an alternative form of internal governance, however, is debatable. For Singermans, informality pervades all aspects of *sha'bi* communities, whereby people even marry and reproduce their families in order to enhance it. Based on familial networks, *sha'bi* residents set up social, economic, and cultural institutions that parallel those in the formal sector. They have their own credit associations (*gama'iyat*), cultural and social institutions (mosque or church complexes), and business and occupational networks, all of which are beyond the state's limits. As Singermans suggests, not only do these networks aim to support channels of services distribution, they are also a tool of political participation in which *sha'bi* people use them to temporize, evade and curb bureaucracy. As a result, for large sections of the Egyptian populace, informality is real life. It is hard not to consider the potential political consequences of *de facto* autonomy that people assert in their everyday life (Singerman, 1995).[8]

[8] Building on Singermans' findings Savvina Chowdhury considers rotating savings and credit associations (*gama'iyat)* as informal economic practices which aim to resist the Egyptian state's "exclusionary way of

To view informality as a ‘state of autonomy’ might be considered an overestimation. By contrast, Ghannam and Ismail see it as a ‘state of agency’ in which a space of tolerance is offered by the authorities on the condition that local networks must have a kind of connection with the bureaucracy, or at least its implicit approval. The example of the crushing of Islamic movements by the state in the 1990s showed how a disregard for formal power structures led to the demise of local figures. For Ismail, the key to understanding how informal-local government works is the ‘politics of conviviality’, which “binds ruler and ruled” (Ismail, 2006a, p. 130). *Sha’bi* quarters’ residents accumulate an intimate knowledge of the everyday state. They cultivate an “intimacy with power in the sense of knowing it closely” in order to create “the context for complicity among the ruled”. The state, in return, keeps for itself the “ritual of presence” publically, which must not be challenged at all (Ibid., p.134). The latter can explain why the state has not tolerated any communal structure that has questioned its control over society.

1.2.1.3 Clientelism Research in Egypt

The neopatrimonial framework can also be considered as part of the field of informality, since clientelism is one of the main political effects of the informalization of the state in developing countries. Patronage politics have often been associated with the deteriorating capacity of the state in the age of globalization and the development of dual/hybrid/bifurcated state systems (Robinson, 2008). Carl Schmitt’s distinction between “legality” and “legitimacy”, and the contradiction between them, is instructive here. This

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organizing economic activity that does not necessarily contribute to a community’s well-being”. (Chowdhury, 2007, p. 131)

contradiction has entailed the bifurcation of the modern state into a "parallel phenomenon of public/judicial/rational and private/extra-judicial/irrational" and the necessity of a top-down deep state that practises para-politics (Wilson, 2013).

According to James Scott, the patron-client relation is an "instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron" (Scott, 1972, p. 92). It is a face-to-face relationship whereby "the mutual expectations of the partners are backed by community values and rituals" (Ibid., p.94). A consideration of patronage politics is essential for understanding power relations in state institutions and among political elites, especially in semi-authoritarian regimes (Guliyev, 2011).

Members of the political elite are recruited on the basis of their political loyalty to the central figure. The neopatrimonial ruler balances different elite segments by *divide-et-impera* and elite rotation or circulation in order to avoid the emergence of alternative power bases. In neopatrimonial regimes, legitimation is established through traditional loyalty (loyalty based on family heritage and religion) and/or through material incentives such as the allocation of jobs, land, grants, licences, etc. The latter aspect "connects studies of neopatrimonialism to political-economic rentier approaches" (Bank and Richter, 2010). Although patron-client

relations usually appear dyadic, studies have revealed that they may also take polyadic forms.[9]

Neopatrimonial theory has been extensively employed in order to understand Egyptian politics since the 1970s. Scholars with a functionalist view of politics have interpreted the Egyptian state as having succumbed not to pluralization as had been thought previously,[10] but rather as having moved towards 'retraditionalization'. It has been said that the failure of political institutions led to a creation of new tools of control based on clientelism, in which society has been governed by informal networks (Hinnebusch, 1985, p. 5). Clusters of cronies *(shillas)* have established shadow "patrimonial rule", through which they compete with each other to exploit public spoils they cannot access legally (Moore, 1977; Springborg, 1979). Economic and political reforms in the 1990s and 2000s were viewed as adapting mechanisms to enhance and reproduce patronage networks, in order to sustain the durability of the regime (Kienle, 2001). Lisa Blaydes has argued that because financial resources have become increasingly strained over time with economic liberalization, elections are needed to manage and update the class of individuals who might be eligible for spoils in exchange for their support (Blaydes, 2010, p. 238).

The Mubarak regime "diversified the crony capitalist system he inherited from Sadat and reaped considerable benefits by so doing" (Henry and Springborg, 2001, p. 154; Springborg,

[9] An example of Polyadic patterns of patron-client relations is power relations in Northern Thailand. See: (Davis et al., 1987, pp. 130–7; Neher, 1972)

[10] For example, Ilya Harik's earlier writings saw the Egyptian regime was going towards expanding the political participation. See: (Harik, 1974).

1989, p. Chapter 4). This was mainly because the introduction of neoliberal policies, privatization, and the withdrawal of the state from society created an environment that facilitates illegal and quasi-legal activities (Sfakianakis, 2004). In the 2000s, patronage politics among political elites has been institutionalized to the extent that it has led researchers to conceptualize its embodiments inside the state. For example, Ninette Fahmy calls this process “co-integrationism”, which is a “system of state control over the various interest groups in society through a strategy of co-option of top group leaders into the system, integrating their interests with that of the state by using special privileges, patronage networks and institutionalized corruption” (Fahmy, 2012, p. 105), while Joshua Stacher calls the same process “councilization”, that is, the tendency to set up new councils to co-opt elites and professionals (Stacher, 2012, pp. 130–5). Guillermo O’Donnell has conceptualized the whole pattern under the term “Bureaucratic Corporatism”, whereby crony clusters in bureaucracy exploit the state and exclude all whom outside it (O’Donnell, 1977).

Clientelism, therefore, pervaded Egyptian politics from its upper levels to the bottom of society. On the local level, Salwa Ismail’s work has shown that economic liberalization and privatization policies have created a social stratum that comprises lower officials, government employees, members of municipal councils, workshop owners, wholesale-retail merchants, and even some NGO figures. The articulation of these segments with the bureaucracy has allowed them to represent informal networks that could be viewed as an alternative to formal structures of government, since they afford residents a means of avoiding the state authorities. In return for their services to the bureaucracy, they are allowed to exploit ‘informality’ to achieve social, economic, symbolic and political advancement and to consolidate their positions (Ismail, 2006a, p. 46).

Mohamed Menza has conducted research on Misr al-Qadima, a suburb in the middle of Cairo, on the eve of the January 25 Revolution. The image he draws can be summarized as follows: lesser notables compete to cultivate connections with representatives of the state or the higher ranks of the NDP. Local figures who win their trust can present themselves as figures who 'serve' residents. The term 'serving' (*khidma*) is problematic because it almost refers to the process of facilitating official procedures (e.g., construction permits, municipal services, employment campaigns, etc.). They also utilize their positions by mainly engaging in rent-seeking activities (as facilitators) or by looking for possible opportunities they can exploit by way of their positions (Fahmy Menza, 2012, pp. 118–9). Menza suggests that informal networks, with lesser notables at the core, must be viewed in terms of patronage politics, in which national patrons recruit local clients/sub-patrons and the latter, in turn, recruit sub-clients who can sometimes become sub-patrons for smaller clients (Ibid).

1.2.1.4 Informality Research: Potentials and Limitations

As can be observed, informality research refers to a broad framework that encompasses theoretical models from different fields: political economy, anthropology, urban sociology, the study of social movements, post-colonial studies and research into elites. Informality offers various analytical keys towards understanding the context in which social agencies set up socio-economic institutions that parallel those in the formal sector. It can also explain how authoritarian regimes subordinate these informal socio-economic institutions to formality as a means by which a variety of dominant social actors can accommodate the needs of sections of society at a minimal cost. It is a style of governance that allows what could be called "local power compacts" (Ismail, 2006a, p. 46) to rise under the bifurcated state's informal supervision.

Informality research, however, is too broad to explain how social practices can be translated into political practices. In a world that is characterised by an increasing interaction of people and the decline of nation states, informal practices have become ubiquitous not only in Egypt but also globally. They penetrate most aspects of our social reality. Informality provides a concrete theoretical foundation for understanding the mechanisms by which people cultivate alternative ways to renegotiate their socio-economic positions within the larger structure. It also uncovers authoritarianism mechanisms for reproducing power. However, it lacks a coherent premise that gives social practices their political meaning. The formal-informal duality, furthermore, implicitly creates a separation between state practices and social practices. This border often hides the fact that the bifurcated state is a part of society and both share the same cognitive structures and social mediums.

On the other hand, the patron-client model is indispensable in any attempt to understand Egyptian politics. However, to overuse this model, without taking into consideration the socio-cultural structures that underpin it, will run the risk of oversimplification. Neopatrimonialism is a universal theory that examines power relations inside modern institutions of power. Therefore, it is too loose to explain how power is exercised or negotiated locally because patronage politics is "amorphousness, latency, elusiveness, and ubiquitousness" (Landé, 1983, p. 451). As Christopher Clapham puts it, it is a "form of organisation in which relationships of a broadly patrimonial type pervade a political and administrative system which is formally constructed on rational-legal lines" (Clapham, 1985, p. 48). However, clientelism needs to be grounded on a self-structuring socio-cultural system of values that makes power relations collectively meaningful. To put it differently,

uncovering relationships inside power structures necessitates a study of the underlying system of values and perceptions on which that power is based.

This is the reason why this study will stress the importance of a comprehensive social analysis, concerned with understanding political mobilization, in order to uncover the *medium* and *habitus* shared by different social agents, and which is prior to the study of power relations. This social medium is responsible for shaping and influencing both formal and informal practices, and attaches values to them. In the political field, furthermore, it is a cognitive structure that is responsible for the system of values that legitimizes clientelist lines. Nevertheless, this medium differs from place to place, and is transferable and changeable over time. This study will argue that, in Cairo's peri-urban fringe, it was neighbourhoodism that constituted the dominant habitus of the political field in the Mubarak era, and it forms the key to understanding socio-political mobilizations in this period.

1.3 Methodology, Argumentation and Methods

1.3.1 On Methodology

This work is based on field research among the "local political elite" in the City of Kerdasa. I include in that term any figure or personality that played any political role on the local level in any period of this study timeframe. Therefore, a significant amount of the empirical data analysed in this work is mainly derived from oral history. Many of the key figures in the local political field (which will be defined in this section) were interviewed, including personalities from the local NDP leadership and the local councils. The fieldwork range also covers three generations of the ruling party (previously the ASU and later the NDP). However, because the ASU veterans passed away before the time that I conducted my

research, I had to know about them from their close relatives, who provided me with sufficient information to identify the main features of ruling party local politics in Cairo's peri-urban fringe in the times of the ASU and NDP. Furthermore, the fieldwork covers representative examples from two generations of the mosque movement in Kerdasa. This movement was responsible of producing local leaders in the MB and the Jihadi movement in Kerdasa who played vital political roles in the second half of the Mubarak era and after the January 25 Revolution.

Kin-based networks are central in political mobilization in Cairo's peri-urban fringe and they have penetrated many aspects of it over the last two decades at least (the mid-1980s to the mid-2000s). Therefore, a significant part of the interviews targeted personalities from the largest *a'ailat* (clans) in Kerdasa, many of whom were involved in local politics at least in one stage of their life. Nevertheless, oral history alone is not enough in understanding the logic behind political mobilization in highly localized areas. In an area where kin-based mobilization has been highly deployed and employed, it is likely that people tend to exaggerate their clans' influence and history and to undermine others. Ironically, if chapter 4, for example, had to rely entirely on oral history, many clans would have glorious and ancient lineage narratives, each trumping the other. Consequently, I had, firstly, to adopt a comparative approach to read these narratives critically and to subject them to close scrutiny. Secondly, I had to develop a theoretical framework to understand the way clannism functions in highly competitive localities. Finally, I had to return to the available written records about the area I examined and about Egypt's social and political history.

In a similar way, this approach has been applied to understand different aspects of political mobilization from the different narratives that each social agent involved in the political field

has produced. Needless to say, all social agents, be they local leaders from the NDP or the MB or even the Salafi movement, had different historical narratives that justified their involvement in the political field in their localities. I assumed that if these narratives were subjected to scrutiny and critically crossed together in light of the available academic knowledge that we have about political mobilization in Egypt more generally, I could build a more sophisticated perspective that may give us a better understanding of political mobilization on the local level.

This approach helped me not only in understanding the changing roles of the NDP men, the Muslim Brothers and other local political groups, it also helped me to identify a common ground that the political field stands on. For example, when I started analyzing the political Islamic mobilization in Cairo's peri-urban fringe (see chapter 3), it initially seemed to me that the mosque movement in Kerdasa, by virtue of its discourse, belongs to an academically established field: politics of identity. I also hypothesized, by common sense, that this type of mobilization would have a historical adversarial relationship with the type of mobilization employed by the NDP (which is clientelism, as I initially hypothesized also). However, I found this relationship more complicated and interactive. In fact, in an early stage of its evolution in the 1980s, it was difficult to expect that the mosque movement would survive without the protection and support provided by the first generation of the NDP generation (whom I call the ASU veterans). This made me conclude that there was actually a "community politics" at play that made this interaction sustainable for almost a decade on the local level.

By assuming that "community politics" is necessary in understanding different types of local political mobilization, I was motivated to understand why local people, under authoritarian

settings, tend to engage in the political field in their localities, although this engagement many times has been risky, restricted and immaterial (see chapter 2). Thus, I assumed that there should be a deep internalized motivation that pushes members from the local community to act politically in different forms, whether through the ruling party or the Islamic opposition or any other entity. Here, the Bourdiean conceptual framework was necessary.

One of the most important premises that can be learned from Bourdieu's Theory of Practice is that one can assume that there is an internalized system of values and perceptions (habitus) that legitimizes or delegitimizes social agents by providing them with different types of capital (social, economic, symbolic and cultural) in the social field. In the political field, not only has this habitus been responsible of legitimizing social agents to be politically recognized, but it is also responsible for defining politics itself. For instance, an act that involves violence against other people could be identified as political (i.e. terrorism, Jihad …), while another act that also involves violence could be identified as apolitical (i.e. *baltaja* (thuggery), *fitna* (sedition) …). It depends how local communities perceive the act. Nevertheless, the boundaries between these perceptions are changeable over time depending on the development of the political field itself.

While certain social practices can be considered apolitical in a specific period, in another period the political field can develop to articulate the same practices with a political meaning. As we will see in the subsequent chapters, many social practices that had implied important local political statuses in a specific period became in a later period ubiquitous and less political. For example, societal mediation in Cairo's peri-urban fringe was a central political practice prior to the mid-1980s. Those who were eligible to conduct mediation were usually

figureheads locally and recognized by the bifurcated state through the Arab Social Union (ASU) and later the National Democratic Party (NDP). From the mid-1980s, with the rise of waves of lesser notables, this practice has become trivial in local politics since many respectable and educated local personalities became eligible to lead these efforts.

Similarly, few people in Cairo's peri-urban fringe, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, could imagine the ASU local figureheads working to improve and develop their towns' infrastructure and amenities. This is because this kind of work was expected to be managed by the central state and not by locals. From the mid-1980s, however, it has become necessary for local politicians to be involved in these sorts of developmental practices, which have gradually changed the NDP's roles in its localities as will be elaborated in chapter 2.

Another example is the Islamic mobilization itself. As we will see in chapter 3, the mosque movement, which had become active from the late 1970s, was not perceived by the ASU veterans as a political movement, although it was considered to be so later on. From the early 1990s, it has become required by the NDP men to be involved in charity work and *da'wa* practices until they almost replaced the roles played by the people of the mosque movement from the late 1990s, in tandem with the Egyptian regime excluding Islamists from the political field by repressive measures.

Baltaja is another example. *Baltaja* literally means thuggery. It is a term used in popular culture to describe any kind of acts that involves illegal violence for personal ends. Those who perpetrate these acts are called *baltajiya* (sing. *baltaji*). Prior to the early 2000, people in Kerdasa used the term *baltajiya* to refer to those transgressors who frequently appeared around the downtown to threaten and mob people, chase women, and deal drugs. It was also

common that some people used their services or hired them when needed. However, local people started to associate them with politics in the 2000s when they were noticed, especially during elections, cooperating with the police. As will be elaborated in chapter 5, *baltajiya* might become a source of recruitment by many entities (the NDP men, security intelligence, …) on the local level due to the increasing competition over the political field as well as the willingness of upper leadership of the NDP to radically reconsider its relationship with its grassroots. Nevertheless, although one could assume that *baltajiya* were used by the Egyptian regime against its political opponents (which was a reality), they were also used against personalities who were historically on the side of the bifurcated state.

These are selective examples that explain why it is important, in this work, to adopt a conceptual framework that allows us to stress the interaction between the structure and practices, which Giddens refers to it as the process of structurization. Firstly, this will help us in observing the development of the political field on the local level, identifying the impacts of social practices on the structure and vice versa. Secondly, it can explain on what basis struggles and compacts among different political agents are locally perceived.

The next step after assuming an embedded historical social medium is responsible for shaping political practices on the local level is to identify it. The next two sections will utilize Bourdieu's theoretical framework on the subject of this research. The following section (section 1.3.2) will identify the main features of the political field, which social agents compete over, while section 1.3.3 will identify the dominant habitus of the political field in Cairo's peri-urban fringe and suggest the historical dynamics that constructed it.

1.3.2 Fieldwork and Methods

After sorting out the anthropological data from the first round of fieldwork interviews (which aimed to accumulate general local knowledge about local political elites in Kerdasa), I realized the importance of framing my field research. Because this work is concerned with local politics, I had to ask myself: what are the borders of the political field on the local level? How can I isolate local politicians from other social actors in the social space? However, this was not a simple task because it depended on the definition of 'local politics', which could be broadened to explain almost everything or narrowed down to barely explain a thing.

For example, both Singermans and Ismail adopt James Scott's definition of politics, which includes most collective social practices that are produced by social institutions in the social space such as families, local enterprises and even clusters of friends. Nevertheless, adopting this definition would paint all collective social practices with the same brush, therefore, questioning if there is such a thing can be called local politics.

On the other hand, one of the problems of searching for local politics in the area which I examined is that a social agent with administrative authorities is not necessarily eligible to be involved in politics and vice versa. For example, a chief in the Local Unit in Kerdasa in the 1990s could have an actual administrative authority over the town whereby no real-estate project could be implemented without his approval. He could become rich by abusing his authority, but he could hardly consider abusing his authority to impose himself on the political field.

As Chapter 2 will explain, this is because executive chiefs in the SLA are usually selected from the army and police (*dubbat*, literally means officers), therefore, they cannot legally work in politics (e.g. running for the NDP primaries) without an 'upper' formal or informal approval. Even if they managed to get this approval, they probably would not succeed in mobilizing local people, or claiming to present them because they are not locals. Hence, many of those who occupied very important administrative posts in the SLA were not regarded as politicians by locals nor by themselves. By contrast, a local citizen, who was a member in the Local Council (which is the representative branch of the SLA) and had no theoretical authority in the law, could have been regarded in his locality as a politician.

To address this problem, I had to operatively define the political field I am studying. Based on the anthropological data I collected, I defined local politics in Cairo's peri-urban fringe as the field where social agents, who are eligible to be politicians in their localities, are competing. They should be locally perceived as politicians regardless of their actual power. To put it differently, I mean by local politicians those social agents who derive their socio-political statuses from local representation and their ability to mobilize local people politically.

In Kerdasa, this definition included many lesser notables from three generations, who might be classified by several variables such as their political or ideological affiliation (the NDP local leaders, the Muslim Brothers, Jihadis, Salafis, and others). They might also be classified by their clans (*a'ailat*), occupation (merchants, real-estate contractors, state employees, …), and generation (1970s, 1980s, …). Nevertheless, all they have in common is that they all claim to represent their given locality or considerable sections of its populace.

This study is restricted to understanding the political practices of this section of lesser notables taking into consideration all the variables mentioned above.

The survey questions (conducted by me or through research assistants) were on the political career of each local figure. From each semi-structured interview, I tried to build a historical narrative that is not only examining the history of the political career of each representative example, but also the logic, motivations, justifications, interests, benefits and drawbacks of their involvement in the political field. This practice resulted in several narratives that I managed to compare them together to extract a historical social perspective about political mobilization in Cairo's peri-urban fringe (see next section).

This methodology allowed me firstly to understand how local politics in Cairo's peri-urban fringe evolved in more than three decades. In chapter 2 and 3 namely, local political elites who witnessed the pre-Mubarak era (I call them the ASU veterans) will be examined and compared to a new model of local political figures from the mid-1980s (who became later the NDP veterans). It will be highlighted how the roles of the local elites evolved entirely with the evolution of the political field.

Secondly, this allowed me to uncover the social medium (or the common 'cognitive structure') that the local political field stands on: the subconscious collective social medium that localizes types of political mobilization that seem different. This will namely be shown in chapter 3, which examines the religious political mobilization, when we will capture the historical interaction between the NDP and the mosque movement in the 1980s. We will show the ground that made the cooperation between Islamists and the ASU veterans possible.

Moreover, this methodology also offers better understanding of the way clannism functions in Cairo's peri-urban fringe. Chapter 4 will show why it is difficult to realize clannism without associating it with the political field and the social medium that we suggest. Finally, this methodology helped me in understanding how local popular committees after the revolution could be locally recognized after they impose themselves on the political field, as will be elaborated in chapter 5.

1.3.2 Argumentation

The urban question has always been implied not only in Egyptian politics, but also in academic research and international reports on Egypt. This can essentially be attributed to several factors, notably the Egyptian state's historical discourse, in which urban development has occupied the foreground in any vision to the extent that urbanization has almost become the state's ideology.[11] This point must be taken seriously if we are to understand Egyptian politics on all levels. Since Nasser, it has become obvious that any ruler acquires part of their legitimacy from their claims to have a solution to the problem of overpopulation in the Nile Valley, including the reallocation of people.

Therefore, Egyptian governments over decades have continuously announced plans for new towns, desert cities and large housing projects, most of which were not completed or ended in small scale projects that benefitted the interests of the upper classes.[12] Nevertheless, this

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[11] For further details and historical reading to the Egyptian state's discourse of urban development see: (Sims, 2014).

[12] Timothy Mitchell attributed the gap between urban reality and urban representations to modes of representation that were historically established in the colonial era. Urban development in Egypt historically

discourse has also affected all layers of the Egyptian society, changed the way people have perceived the social world and radically changed their relationships and attitudes to their own spaces. Paradoxically, social and cultural research on Egypt has lacked deep insights into and analyses of this dimension.

Spatial awareness is more sensitive in towns and villages around Egyptian cities, because these areas have been greatly affected and transformed by the process of urbanization and the continuous expansion of the borders of urban centres. In Cairo's peri-urban fringe, local elites have experienced intense transformations and radical changes in many social and cultural fields, which have had fundamental consequences for the shape of socio-political mobilization since the late 1970s. For local communities, living around Cairo has meant, on the one hand, a relatively better share in urban exchange and an opportunity to constitute local markets that have contributed to meeting the Egyptian capital's needs. On the other hand, this relation with the urban centre has led to a restructuring of local mobility in contradictory ways, producing new types of mobilization and ideologies that assert localism.

The subject of this study is precisely to explore one aspect of the interaction between the macro and the micro dynamics. It aims to understand the "dialectical relationship between action and order" (Adler et al., 1987, p. 229), in which the macro creates the historical, social, and cultural orientations that determine social practices on the micro level, but at the same time in which social practice serves "as an agent of its own self-production" (Ibid.). This

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provided the state with "statistical knowledge" that created a gap between reality and its representation. This was because statistics did not aim to produce accurate knowledge, but rather a knowledge of "control and calculation" (Mitchell, 2002, p. 114).

approach requires not only an examination of both contemporary social practices and the underlying structures that produce them, but also a construction of the history of the structuralization that social agents – institutions, groups and individuals – have participated within.

Hence, this study is an attempt to grasp the underlying cognitive structure of these transformations. It argues that the political field in Cairo's peri-urban fringe, in the era of Mubarak, was subjected to the development of a habitus that contributed to the shaping of most of the socio-political practices of its elites. This structure, on the one hand, was responsible for producing the new authoritarian strategies that have been used to control localities. It was responsible for building up the system of values on which patron-client relations have been based. On the other hand, it has also transformed social spaces into an arena that resists the hegemony of the state. As stated earlier, I will call this cognitive structure *neighbourhoodism*.[13]

1.3.2.1 The Rise and the Establishment of Neighbourhoodism

What I mean by 'neighbourhoodism' is the development of a dominant habitus in the political field that places the representation of social spaces in the foreground of socio-

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[13] The term "neighbourhoodism" was used for the first time by Philip Abrams in an attempt to understand strategies social practices used by minorities in order to be integrated in European cities, he defined the term as an "attempt by newcomers to create a local social world through political or quasi-political action. Great organizational skills and ingenious organizational devices are often used to mobilize old and new residents alike in order to protect amenities, enhance resources, and to a greater or lesser degree wrench control of the local milieu from outside authorities and vest it in strictly local hands" (Abrams and Bulmer, 1986, p. 95). I borrow this term from Abraham, but I give it refers to different meaning as it will be elaborated in this chapter.

political mobilization and political representation – thus giving political meanings to the social practices of the different groups in that social space. Through neighbourhoodism, social agents have been able to translate their social, cultural and symbolic capitals into political capital, qualifying themselves to be locally recognized as political representatives. Hence, neighbourhoodism was the "forgotten history" which motivated individuals to act politically and perceived by local communities as politicians.

At the same time, the socio-political practices that have been produced through neighbourhoodism have also contributed to a consolidation of the same habitus, offering a mutual ground on which to build endless political alliances between social actors. Furthermore, neighbourhoodism has been responsible for making local social actors aware of their 'localness', enabling them to organize themselves on this basis before the state. Moreover, neighbourhoodism has determined social agents' positions in the political field and driven them to produce forms of symbolic violence in order to protect their statuses (positions in the Bourdieusian field).

Four associated factors contributed to the establishment of neighbourhoodism as a dominant habitus in the Cairo peri-urban fringe. Firstly, a change in the internal migration pattern from the late 1970s, which shifted to a 'stay-at-home' inertia. Migration from the countryside to cities nearly stopped, which meant that most locals tended to settle down in their hometowns (Sims, 2010, p. 32). This has meant that most residents of the peri-urban fringe have stopped viewing their localities as temporary spaces. They have become able to imagine their new hometowns and villages as spaces where they can stay for the rest of their lives. Consequently, they have been induced to establish organizational relations with other locals, relations that have involved an objectification of their towns and villages.

The second factor was the change in the Egyptian state's developmental policies. From the early 1980s, the Egyptian government started to implement a new system of governance that stressed the role of local units in development. This policy can be explained as a result of Egypt's liberal turn from the mid-1970s, and of the later neoliberal policies that were induced by the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund-sponsored Structural Adjustment Programme (Vannetzel, 2017, pp. 224–5). This involved the application of a new System of Local Administration (SLA), which aimed gradually to place a significant part of the task of development onto the shoulders of local agencies. However, as chapter 2 will elaborate, this factor should be understood in a dialectical way, whereby the evolution of the SLA and local NDP branches was also an institutional attempt by the state to cope with neighbourhoodism and rationalizing it (in the Weberian sense). Hence, understanding state policies as a response to neighbourhoodism does not negate the fact that the state was also contributing to the phenomenon.

The third factor was the process of urbanization, and the Cairene real-estate boom from the late 1980s, which doubled the Egyptian capital's size, or at least added a surface "equivalent to more than a third of the existing city and suburbs" (Dorman, 2013, p. 1601). This entailed a quick increase in the prices of land and the flourishing of real-estate businesses in Cairo's peri-urban fringe. This, on one hand, made towns and villages around Cairo attractive for newcomers who could not afford to live in the city, and on the other hand, it led a segment of empowered "lesser notables"[14] in the outskirts, who had been marginalized previously, to

[14] Hana Batatu used the term "lesser rural notables" to refer to segments of the Syrian peasantry who had been marginalized before the Ba'th rule and became the regime grassroots afterwards (Batatu, 1999). Salwa Ismail

become a social force to be reckoned with in their localities. This segment was compromised of two main categories. Firstly, those who had been agrarian workers, who kept plots of land (which had been designated for agricultural activities) and suddenly found themselves in possession of valuable land assets. Secondly, the *infitah* beneficiaries, those who had benefited from the oil boom in the 1970s, such as the owners of workshops and merchants, or who had worked in the oil-based economies of the Gulf states and used their remittances from the late 1970s to invest in the real-estate sector as a way to secure their savings from inflation.

Scholarship on Egypt has been aware of the impact of the oil boom and the real-estate boom on social mobility, which has affected most sectors of society.[15] This study, nevertheless, focuses on another aspect of the phenomenon, arguing that in Cairo's peri-urban fringe, the increasing ascendancy of real-estate business (in general) led to the increase of a local sense of social space, and contributed to the consolidation of neighbourhoodism. Since this period, local people have become more sensitive towards public spaces and also towards the negligent role of the state. This has deepened the sense of marginalization among locals and driven them to scrutinize the discriminatory urban policies of the state, especially when they have observed that successive governments have allocated resources to develop new desert towns while neglecting their localities.

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then used "lesser notability" to refer to segments in the urban quarters, who rose from *infitah* policies and became eligible to be mediators between their communities and the state (Ismail, 2006a, pp. 47–8). Mohamed Menza utilized the term later to understand clientelism in Cairo's urban quarters (Fahmy Menza, 2012).

[15] See for example: (Amin, 2001).

The forth factor can be attributed to the distinctive historical relation that attached Egyptians to the state, especially in Lower Egypt. From a historical-sociological perspective, the Egyptian state, from the late nineteenth century at least, has been characterized by a highly centralized nature (Ayubi, 1980, pp. 497–498) that prevented the constitution of most forms of communal group (Baer, 1964, pp. 165–166, 1969, pp. 40–1). Throughout modern Egyptian history, as many historians have pointed out, the central authority was able to overcome and violently crush *fellahin* riots, without needing to make compromises or to adopt structural adjustments in ruling coalitions (Brown, 1990; Fahmy, 1997). When the 'public' was gradually politicized in 'the age of republics',[16] this had a distinctive effect. In Cairo's peri-urban fringe, a consequence of this has been the organization of social agents on a spatial basis. Hence, unlike other rural societies in the Middle East, such as the Levant and Iraq, where its *fellahin* were able to use identity politics (e.g. sectarianism and tribalism) to defend themselves from modernity and to adapt with the state building historical processes (Bishara, 2015), their Egyptian counterparts, in specific areas, were too weak and fragmented to do likewise. Instead, they began to produce a politics of space as one of the few means by which they could outmanoeuvre the state as well as its agents.[17] However,

[16] In his book on sectarianism (*al-ta'ifiya*), Azmi Bishara argues that elites in Arab pre-modern states had never concerned themselves with "politicizing the public". The politicization of the public began in the era of republics (Bishara, 2018, pp. 44–5).

[17] I have recently published a study that explores the evolution of the relationship between the modern state in Egypt and its peripheries. I have argued that the history of exclusion by the highly centralized state has created a gap between broad social strata and the public political sphere. This led people in the peripheries to engage in daily sub-political options that avoided the state instead of confronting it, to negotiate rights with the bureaucracy and its patronage networks, and to search for alternative strategies to build communal groups as a

while neighbourhoodism has been an effect of Egyptian authoritarianism, it has also served Egyptian authoritarian practices, and in the Mubarak era it offered the Egyptian bifurcated state strategies for coopting intersectional segments from local communities. This was mainly the local NDP, which manifested itself as the guardian of social spaces.

For these reasons, neighbourhoodism has shaped the political practices of social agents in the Cairo peri-urban fringe, creating a new kind of socio-political mobilization that made local elites compete to represent their social spaces. This is not to argue for the novelty of the relationship between people and their local space. In fact, this relationship has always been expressed in the rural imaginary. In literature, for example, most Egyptian novelists have written at least one novel about the *fellah* and his village.[18] Rather, this thesis argues that from the late 1970s, in Cairo's peri-urban fringe at least, the politicization of social space has become central in the political *field*. Neighbourhoodism, as a cognitive structure, has offered local social agents a basis for acting politically, formally or informally. In short, neighbourhoodism was responsible of localizing politics itself.

As this thesis will show, nearly all social agents in Cairo's peri-urban fringe who sought to play a role in local politics were involved in politicizing their social spaces, at least at one stage in their political career. Those agents were from different ideological and cultural backgrounds. They encompassed actors from the local NDP, Islamists and other local

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form of protection from the state. One of these strategies, as this thesis argues, was based on neighbourhoodism. (Awad, 2018)

[18] (Selim, 2004, p. 2). Selim attributed this to "the growing centrality of the peasant and land question in modern nationalist consciousness and the ideology of the [Egyptian] state.". (Ibid, pp.2-3).

figures. However, the constructing of neighbourhoodism did not happen overnight. It was an outcome of sustained social practices, individual and collective, formal and informal, which eventually resulted in an intense competition over the representation of social space. The late 1970s that first witnessed the emergence of neighbourhoodism, but it was from the late 1980s that this came to become the dominant habitus of the political field. Local communities experienced an intense struggle among social agencies, who tried to protect their positions and acquire recognition by developing strategies that involved symbolic violence. This violence was not restricted to agents from different political affiliations; it was also prevalent among those who were supposed to belong to the same political group. As chapters 2 and 4 will show, it was found among the NDP, for example, who employed many strategies, one of which was clannism. It also occurred between Islamists, who competed over mosques, as will be discussed in chapter 3.

1.3.3 Note on the Fieldwork Interviews

This research and its conclusions are based on information collected from a variety of sources, the most important being a series of in-depth interviews. Many interviews that are related to the popular committee in Kerdasa (see chapter 5) were conducted in December 2012 in Kerdasa, and in October 2013 in Doha (through VoIP applications). The interviews with the MB leaders, jihadists and salafists and about the mosque movement (see chapter 3) were held from March to October 2016 personally in Istanbul (except one interview in Khartoum through a research assistant). This is because Istanbul was the refuge where many Kerdasians had fled after the bloody clashes that took place in August 2013, when the local police station was attacked by armed assailants in response to the breakup of the Rabeaa Adawiya and Nahda protest camps.

The interviews that are related to the NDP, the ASU and the SLA were mostly undertaken in Kerdasa through Sherif Moheyeldeen, from November 2016 to January 2017, who recorded these interviews with the interviewees' consent. Finally, the vast majority of interviews on clans history, lineages and politics were undertaken throughout the whole period of research either together with Hussain Saleh Omar, who belongs to one of the largest clans in Kerdasa, or by him alone.

Finally, for ethical reasons, I am not able to list a full, detailed table of my interviewees. This is not only because many interviewees did not authorize citing them, but also because I sometimes sensed that some information could be misused in highly localized settings. Therefore, I had to anonymize certain interviewees in many places in this study. Some information was commonly found in numerous different settings and contexts, and so is cited as coming from "various interviews". However, each chapter will refer to its key interviews, which will all be listed at the end of this work.

1.4 Neo-Localism in the Cairo Peri-Urban Fringe

The Greater Cairo peri-urban frontier refers to those areas where the rural-urban transformation is taking place. These localities, which surround the City of Cairo, are strictly neither rural nor urban. This region includes nine rural administrative zones (*marakiz*): Qaliub, Al-Khanka, Shibeen el-Qanatir, and El-Qanatir el-Khieriya in Qaliubia Governorate and in Giza Governorate: Imbaba, Ausim, Badrashain, El-Hawamidiya and Kerdasa. According to the 2006 Egyptian national census, the population of the nine peri-urban *marakiz* was estimated at 4.21 million inhabitants, representing 24.7% of Greater Cairo's 17 million inhabitants. The population growth in these areas has been significantly above the

prevailing natural increase rates, averaging 3.27% per annum over the 1996-2006 period (during which Greater Cairo grew at an annual rate of 2.1%, and the nation at 2.01%). In the previous 1986-1996 period, growth in peri-urban areas was also strong, when it averaged annual increases of 3.3% compared to 1.66% per year for Cairo Governorate and 1.9 % per year for Delta governorates (Sims, 2008). Nevertheless, the so called 'rural-urban transformation' in Egypt has been taking place in the discourse of urbanism, rather than reflecting the rural and urban realities. In reality, most of what is administratively considered rural in Cairo's peri-urban fringe was urbanized a relatively long time ago. As chapter 2 will discuss, this is because 'urbanization' in Egypt should be viewed as a process of long-term socio-political negotiations and manoeuvres between local agencies and the state, whereby local social agents act collectively to seize their right to be 'urbanized'.

David Sims points out the main reasons for the growing attraction of peri-urban areas. Firstly, they offer affordable housing solutions as an alternative to the congested and expensive options in the centre of the Egyptian capital. Since development is largely out of sight, there is "less prohibition on building on agricultural land than along the informal fringes of the core agglomeration of Greater Cairo" (Sims, 2010, p. 72, See also: Mosilhi, 2017). Secondly, the availability of affordable public transport systems and networks, which make it easy to commute from far-distant towns to other parts of Greater Cairo. Furthermore, there are jobs available in these areas. The incremental growth of population has been accompanied with the development of local economies that generate employment and petty entrepreneur opportunities within peri-urban villages and informal settlements themselves. Moreover, domestic social cohesion in the Cairo peri-urban fringe is strong, even with substantial numbers of newcomers. This is partly, according to Sims, due to the dynamic of

informality (which relies upon and works through social groupings) (Sims, 2010, p. 73; Horwood, 2011, pp. 53–4).

All these factors should be also associated with the change of the internal immigration pattern on a national level. From the 1980s, net rural-to-urban migration diminished greatly. The population growth of Greater Cairo was almost completely explained by “natural increase and expanding boundaries, with net in-migration almost at zero”. This, according to Sims, indicated that people generally tended to settle down and to live in their localities or nearby. (Sims, 2010, p. 32) In tandem of this development on the macro level, both the NDP and the SLA were founded at the very time when patterns of migration had fundamentally changed, and local communities had begun to show a ‘stay-at-home’ inertia, investing economically and politically in their localities. Thus, one could assume that there should be a relationship between the pattern of social movement and the process of decentralization, a relation that will be discussed in chapter 2.

One of the main observations in this thesis is that the process of urbanization, as discussed above, has shaped the socio-economic mobilization among local communities. It has created a new segment of empowered ‘lesser notables’ from the real-estate sector, which had been marginalized in the pre-Mubarak era, and who have risen to the forefront of local politics. Three intertwined reasons contributed to the rise of this segment. Firstly, the property boom and the expansion of the metropolis to its outskirts from the late 1990s. This led to a rise in real-estate prices and the increasing need for local agencies working in real-estate contracting, who have recruited a substantial workforce to accommodate the local demand. A second reason was the abundance of capital flowing into Egypt from the 1970s oil boom, and most importantly from Egyptian workers outside the country, especially the Gulf States,

which accelerated the investment in real-estate properties as protection from inflation (Dorman, 2007, p. 86).

The third reason was the reluctance of the Egyptian state to allocate public funds for the development of huge real-estate projects and infrastructure in the peri-urban areas. This was due to the state's tendency to channel resources to desert developments, which include new towns, industrial zones, growth poles, development corridors, agricultural bread baskets, coastal resort towns, housing estates and gated communities (Sims, 2014). The impact of the state's development policies on the Cairo peri-urban frontier was twofold. Firstly, it encouraged native capital to fill the gap that had been left by the state, motivating the emergence of local networks, mostly informal, to service its localities and later to claim their political representation. Furthermore, it created grievances among local communities, which have produced victimhood discourses that led to many clashes between local organizations and the state during the last two decades (Habitat, 2008, p. 16).

These clashes have included those between the state and Jihadists. During the 1990s, many towns in Cairo's peri-urban frontier witnessed violent clashes and Islamic insurgencies. Between 1992 and 1998, the Egyptian security agencies launched one of their largest arrest campaigns against Jihadists and Islamists in response to assaults on state institutions, as well as tourism facilities. Towns in Cairo's peri-urban fringe, such as Imbaba, Kerdasa, Nahia, and al-Materia, were targeted alongside other cities and towns in Upper Egypt.

While the regime's repression of militant Islam in Upper Egypt has been fairly well studied (Toth, 2003), the experience of Political Islam in Cairo's outskirts is less well understood. It is not clear why scholarship has been preoccupied with Upper Egypt as a social ground of

militant Islam, which produced the armed Islamic group *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya*, while it has almost ignored the different social context of semi-rural Cairo, which produced more popular Salafi movements, such as *al-Jihad al-Islami*. One study quoted leaders from both Southern and Northern Islamic movements in the 1990s, who articulated the difference between the two Islamic organizations. As one of the leaders of *al-Gama'a* stated in response to a journalist's question: "Which Jihad? The Sa'idi Jihad or the Cairo Jihad?". The Cairene Jihadi, on the other hand, distinguished between the two movements by stating:

> Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya is led by university students from southern Egypt. By this, I also refer to the difference in culture and the impact of the environment on the mentality of this group. The Jihad movement, on the other hand, is led by military officers, engineers, and doctors and they are from the north. (Fandy, 1994, p. 609)

Another member of *al-Gama'a* described the differences by stressing that:

> In the south there is only one Islamic force: al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya. Unlike Jihadi groups, composed of clusters of secret organizations with different names like al-Fatah, al-Tal'i, al-Khilapha, and al-Nasr, that have no mosques or social relations, we are a social force that conducts our work in the open through our mosques and our relations with the larger society. (Ibid. See also: Ayubi, 2003, pp. 62–64)

Thus, while the Islamic movement in Upper Egypt was popularly isolated and restricted to secret clusters of youths in universities, its counterpart in the Cairo outskirts and the Delta was socially rooted, reflecting active grassroots and socio-political mobilization. It is enough to mention that both Nahia and Kerdasa embraced two Salafi sheikhs who would go on to play a very crucial role in later years. The first was Ali al-Qinawi, a figurehead in *al-Jihad al-Islami*, who was active in Kerdasa mosques in the late 1980s and later helped to raise a generation of political Salafists, who have been the pillar of the Cairene Salafi movement in the last ten years. The other figurehead was Sheikh Salah Abu Ismail from Hormos (near Imbaba), whose son (Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, also a Salafi figurehead) would play a very

crucial role in the post-revolutionary era. Both, according to local people, were very active in the whole region as well as in Islamic preaching (*al-Da'wah al-Islamia*). As chapter 3 will show, both can also be viewed as a reflection of the rise of new lesser notables who utilized the mosque movement in the 1980s to impose themselves on the political field though in different ways.

Formal Egyptian discourse has also significantly contributed to marginalizing the study of Cairo's peri-urban frontier. This can be readily observed from the language of discrimination and stigmatization implied by those few studies that have occasionally mentioned this region. A widely quoted Egyptian study has described areas like Kerdasa, Nahia, Saft al-laban, and other towns, as a "theatre for distorted urban expansion", which has embraced "alienated immigrants who have been uprooted from their rural traditional environment […] to become a raw material for extremist organizations" (Shalabi, 2000, p. 135; Abu al-Ola, 2013). This statement epitomizes the predominant view of Cairo's peripheries in the Egyptian academy.

This was the context in which the sense of 'localness' was born in the Cairo peri-urban fringe. The collective sense of marginalization, and the ability of local social agencies to assume responsibility for what should have been the province of the state, has constructed a form of socio-political cohesion among locals that has led to the emergence of a 'local community'. The distinctive feature of the local is its ability to produce a variety of informal organizations that emphasize their desire to gain local political representation.

Over time, this process has made neighbourhoodism dominant in the political *field* (to use Bourdieu's term), motivating people to produce a form of politics that stresses the relation

between locals and their localities, and which offers a ground for local elites to cultivate allies, *strategies* (in Bourdieu's sense), and different modes of socio-political mobilization on this basis. In Cairo's peri-urban fringe, a politicizing of social space has pervaded most aspects in the political mobilization. This was the motivating factor that mobilized contradictory movements and groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), the NDP, Salafists and even *a'ailat* (clans). Neighbourhoodism, therefore, has been the cognitive structure and base on which the regime has created its means of control, and at the same time the base from which other political or social agencies have resisted the state.

1.4.1 Kerdasa: The Fall of Localism and the Rise of Neo-Localism

This study is based on extensive research in Kerdasa, one of the major towns and centres of Cairo's peri-urban frontier. Kerdasa is located in the South-West of Giza governorate. Egypt's 2006 census estimated the population of Kerdasa City to be 69,317 (Egypt's 2006 Census). If we take into consideration the annual growth combined with the inter-immigration rate to the peri-urban fringe of Cairo, which is about 3.4%, we can estimate that the current population over 100,000. However, government statistics are not reliable, as demographic experts often point out, and many Kerdasians themselves often produce different estimates.

Many people in Kerdasa believe that they have common roots. Elders talk of how the Kerdasians came with the Arabs who conquered Egypt in the middle of seventh century. That is the reason, they claim, why the old village received its name (Kerdasa from *Kardus*, lit. 'military barracks'). Others attribute their origin to Upper Egypt, which explains the sharing of some vowels with the *Sa'idi* accent. Due to this, they believe that they have

inherited Arab values such as generosity to guests and 'rigour' (*shidda*) against enemies and outsiders. The latter character, *shidda,* explains in their opinion why Kerdasa has been targeted and stigmatized since the time of Nasser (Various Interviews). However, as this section will show, Kerdasians' imaginary of their history is not the same as Kerdasa's actual history.

In his encyclopedic work *Khiṭāṭ at-Tawfīqīyah al-Jadīdah* (1886), Ali Pasha Mubārak said that Kedasa in the nineteenth century was a village in which "sons of Mikkawi" were famous for their luxurious houses and orchards of fruits and palms (Mubārak, 1310, vol. 15, pp.4–5). The village was also known for planting high vegetables, for its woven traditional weaving handicrafts and grain milling. Most importantly, Kerdasa was a caravan trading post for slaves and pilgrims between Maghrebi countries and the rest of Egypt, and also to the east and south (Ibid.). Thus, Kerdasa, like few other towns in the rural hinterland, was a merchant community, taking advantage of the communications network that linked Libya and the Kingdom of Wadai through Cairo with Central Africa (Walz, 2010, p. 91), a station for slave brokering (Baer, 1967, p. 425), and a market for small-scale industrial activities such as cotton weaving and clothes production (Lawson, 1981, p. 139; Stanley, 1912, p. 305).

Being a station for serving the trade routes had consequences. It gave the town a continuous need for strong local leadership that had ties to macro powers for protection. From the later eighteenth century to 1812, Mohammad Ali al-Mikkawi, a prominent merchant, played this role backed by Murad Bey, an influential Mamluki commander. Contemporary Mikkawis claim that their forefathers led an alliance with the Zumor family in Nahia, and other local compacts in the surrounding towns (Mikkawi, Moataz). They all enjoyed the privilege of

being merchants in Ottoman Egypt.[19] However, when Mohammad Ali Pasha came to power, he sought to consolidate power and wealth in the hands of his officials, who "shared a lack of rootedness in local society" (Ghazaleh, 2013, p. 77). As a result, a series of battles took place in 1811-2 between Murad Bey's allies and the Pasha's troops, as al-Jabarti recounted in his history of Egypt (Al-Jabarti, 2013, vol. 1, pp.252–3). The Mikkawis came to realize that they had backed the losing side. They found themselves refugees in the Libyan city of Tripoli (Al-Jabarti, 2013, vol. 1, pp.252–3). A few years later, they managed to obtain clemency through intermediaries, and returned to their hometown, but with almost no power (Al-Jabarti, 2013, vol. 1, pp.252–3).

This is the context for understanding the rise of other local compacts that challenged the Mikkawis' domination in Kerdasa. Although the Mikkawis seized the *umda* position starting in 1866, local figures from other families, such as the Omars, were able to occupy positions such as that of *sheikh al-balad* from the second half of the nineteenth century (Omar, Hussain, Interview). However, local positions generally were deteriorating by the end of that century (Baer, 1982, pp. 101–5), in tandem with the consolidation of a modern bureaucratized state, which entailed the development of a highly centralized system that undermined the roles that had been played by local intermediaries (Hunter, 1999). Therefore, social status became less associated with the role of middleman, and became measured by other factors such as land ownership, wealth, education and occupation (especially in the

[19] As Pascale Ghazaleh puts it, "At the turn of the [nineteenth] century, then, being a *tajir* [=merchant] meant being able to mobilize men and merchandise, sometimes to assist rulers who did not have the means to do so. In the following decades, merchants lost many of their diplomatic, judicial, and military functions" (Ghazaleh, 2013, p. 77).

public sector). Hence, in a community that could hardly be considered agrarian, and which had a diversified economy that was increasingly attached to the urban centre, there were many parties who found the opportunity to accrue social capital.

For the period stretching from the late nineteenth century to the fall of Royal Egypt, there are several general observations that can be made about Kerdasa's social space. Firstly, unlike most villages in the countryside, especially in Upper Egypt (Abdel-Fadil, 1975, p. 23), villages in the rural hinterlands witnessed a decreasing concentration of wealth among their elites. In the first half of the twentieth century, many Kerdasian families could buy plots of land from the Mikkawis. Familial handcraft production prospered to meet the need of the urban centres. For example, a government survey in 1925 indicated that Kerdasa was "quite a centre for weaving, apparently having 920 looms at work" ("'Nubdha Sinâ'iyya,'" 1925, n. cited by Charlcraft, 2005, p.362). Therefore, new families such as the Omars, Issas, Sheikhs and others, who had been socio-economically impoverished and exploited in the previous century, were now able to improve their socio-economic position to become peers to many of the Mikkawis.

A consequence of this was the emergence of local disputes, especially when the rising families began to evoke the history of the Mikkawis' exploitation of their forefathers. Members of the Omar clan to this day tell stories of their grandfathers who confronted the Mikkawis in the first half of the twentieth century. But as Chapter 4 will show, these stories should be understood as one aspect of the invention of clannism as a *strategy* of socio-political mobilization to compete over the political field. What is important to stress here is that the role of local notables in the royal era was restricted to the settling of such local disputes (alongside other everyday disputes, of course). This required distributing local

positions to more than one family in order to maintain domestic stability. In Kerdasa, the Mikkawis held the *umda* position and the Omars had the *sheikh al-balad.* In short, while local notables in the nineteenth century had been mediators between urban-based rulers and their local communities, in the following century they became mediators among the locals themselves. However, even the role of mediation will later be marginalized in favor of new forms of local governance, as chapter 2 will show.

The continuous decline of political localism in the rural hinterland was reflected on the social space at the micro level. In Kerdasa, in the royal era, the possession of social capital could not be translated into political capital. Having a strongly rooted position in local society meant socio-economic security, but nothing more. This was mainly due to the political order in the royal era, in which political positions were appointed within very limited circles, mostly urban, or given to those in rural areas who had acquired the title of Pasha, which could be hereditary or granted. It was also not unusual to find many members of the Pasha's extended family who were impoverished or of modest socio-economic status. In Kerdasa, only one branch of the Mikkawi family contained someone with the title. In the first half of the twentieth century, this was Mahmoud Fahmi Mikkawi (1918-1982). He was the first one in his locality to gain this title after his father and grandfather had the title of bey. However, he acquired this title in the late 1930s, when the expansion of the middle class pressurized the palace to upgrade a class of urban and rural notables from effendis to beys and from beys to pashas[20]. Thus, Mahmoud Pasha did not acquire the title because he was strong but rather due to the deterioration of the political status of the pasha title over time.

[20] For a historical account of these developments see Ryzova (2014)

However, he was ambitious to become involved in politics by running for parliament. Being a pasha at that time was not enough to be a politician. A member of parliament should also have the means to mobilize voters in his constituency. In most cases in rural Egypt, this was achieved through the pasha's clientelist lines, through *umdas* who distributed vote money to *fellahin* (Whidden, 2013, pp. 65–100). This was not applicable to Kerdasa, which possessed a relatively advanced market and a plurality of interest groups that could not be simply bought. Thus, Mahmoud Pasha invested heavily in the town in order cultivate alliances across a broad local social base. In 1943, he founded an association for the textile industry that encompassed the members of the various wealthy families who mainly owned the textile workshops (Abu Issa, Mikkawi M., Interviews). In 1944, he established a cooperative society for providing local people with provisions. In 1946, he founded another cooperative society to provide Kerdasa's housewives with alternative sources of income (various interviews). In the late 1940s, he managed through his connections in the government to supply the town with a modern system of drinking water, along with a system of public transport and the establishment of a post office (Ibid.). Mahmood Pasha was elected in 1946, but this was only after selling more than half of his real-estate properties to raise funds for his town projects (Moataz Mikkawi, Interview). Nevertheless, as Chapter 4 will show, Mahmoud Pasha's motivations could not only be explained by politics, but also by the meaning of being a pasha in his time.

Mahmoud Fahmi Mikkawi left an impressive legacy not only in Kerdasa, but also in the surrounding towns. He was also active in parliament, in which he was a member of the legislative committee that proposed several laws. After the July 1952 coup, he was chosen by the revolutionary regime to become the head of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) in

Kerdasa, a base from which he continued to develop the town. In the 1950s, for example, he helped to convince the government to establish five factories in Kerdasa. Finally, in 1958, he established Kerdasa's sports club. Fahmi Mikkawi's efforts can be explained by the ability of the Egyptian state to mobilize local elites in some villages. The political system, through members of parliament in the late royal era, and thorough the ASU in the Nasser era, was able to offer a ground for socio-political mobilization that replaced the roles formerly played by kinship, as both Iliya Harik and Leonard Binder have pointed out (Binder, 1978; Harik, 1974).

However, this situation did not last for long. In 1965, Nasser's security forces raided Kerdasa, and humiliated the majority of its residents, after a few villagers had protected a house in Kerdasa from undercover security intelligence agents, who were not recognized by the locals. The town suffered from collective punishment and discriminatory policies for years, according to many Kerdasians. As Chapter 3 will show, this incident contributed to the shaping of local memory in later years. From the late 1980s, the year 1965 was retrospectively perceived by many Kerdasians to be the beginning of a tense relationship between the state and the town, to the extent that most local NDP leaders themselves were convinced that their hometown had been a victim of state policies.

Nevertheless, in general, political localism at that time had already broken down. The fall of localism was not only due to the emergence of modern norms of government (Focault, 1991), and the proliferation of a modern governmentality in which "power relations have been progressively governmentalized and […] centralized in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions" (Foucault, 1982, p. 793). Its collapse was also an effect of local spaces becoming increasingly perceived as 'temporary' places, as the internal migration pattern, at

least since the WW1, has suggested (Abu-Lughod, 1972). To put it differently, politics became almost unthinkable outside the urban centre in which the modern bureaucracy was based.

Political localism would have to wait until the late 1970s to reemerge. This occurred, however, under the new conditions that were discussed in this chapter. In short, these were the change in the pattern of internal migration, the change in the state's policies and the process of urbanization. This study is about neo-localism in Cairo's peri-urban fringe and its impact on socio-political mobilization in the era of Mubarak. The following chapters will address different aspects of what I call neighbourhoodism, which underlies the socio-political practices of varying social agents, producing different and sometimes contradictory strategies that led to a redefinition of politics, and thereby transformed the model of 'governmentality'.

1.5 The Structure of this Study

This study is presented in five chapters. This first chapter lays out the general arguments, research framework, methodologies, literature review, and the critical background to the fall of localism and subsequent rise of neo-localism in Cairo's peri urban fringe. The following four chapters will employ the critical framework developed in this chapter to address different aspects of socio-political mobilization. By examining the case of Kerdasa, chapter 2 will address the development of local politics and its relationship with neighbourhoodism, arguing that the rise of the local NDP and the SLA was partly an attempt to rationalize, in the Weberian sociological sense, the increasing politicization of social spaces. This chapter

will also address the historical development of the roles of local NDP men and their relations with the state and their localities.

Neighbourhoodism, as this study argues, was the habitus of the political field in Cairo's peri-urban fringe. Therefore, it was not restricted to shaping the state's type of governmentality, but also pervaded other types of political mobilization. Chapter 3 will show how this was reflected by the mobilization of political Islam, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. Even the rise of the mosque movement can partly be viewed as an expression of the politicization of space. From the late 1970s, Islamists became involved in the objectification of social spaces and its redefinition. The chapter will also address other aspects of this issue, such as the struggle between *sheikhs* for Kerdasa's mosques. It suggests that these struggles can be viewed as a reflection of the rise of new political lesser notables who came to impose themselves on the political field. Moreover, the chapter will reflect on the development of the relations between Islamists and the NDP.

Chapter 4 will address the intense competition between local agents over the representation of space once neo-localism has been established as a *political field*. As a consequence of the rise of the real-estate business as a dominant sector, Cairo's peri-urban fringe witnessed a 'glut' of notables in the 1990s, which made local elites develop new strategies in their struggle over space. One of these strategies was clannism. The failure of local elites to organize themselves in formal institutions in the context of authoritarianism led them to evoke 'imagined clans' to claim their eligibility for representing their localities. This strategy involved symbolic violence, which was inflicted through the stigmatization of the other families in the town. Finally, Chapter 5 will view the implications of neighbourhoodism during and after the January 25 Revolution. An extensive investigation of this will reveal not

only the politicizing of space by local agents, but also how the state itself perceived the space as politicized.

2

THE NDP, THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM AND NEIGHBOURHOODISM IN CAIRO'S PERI-URBAN FRINGE

In 2005, the Prime Minister and Governor of al-Giza issued two decrees stipulating the conversion of Kerdasa from a village that had been affiliated to the City of Ausim to its new status as an independent city and Administrative Centre (*markaz idari*) for twelve towns and villages, to the west and north of Greater Cairo. Within two years, several new government institutions had been established, such as a police station (*markaz shorta*) in the centre of town, a City Council (*majlis al-madina*), a Popular Council (*al-majlis al-sha'bi*), and a number of other institutions. This decision changed the legal status of many activities and transactions in the town. For example, all real-estate properties, including land, residential apartments, and commercial stores, automatically fell under the new tenancy law, which slightly benefited owners at the expense of their tenants. The decision also expanded the area that had been designated for urbanization at the expense of agricultural land. [21]

Prior to this period, Kerdasa had been administratively considered a village, although its population, according to the 2006 Egyptian Census, had exceeded 60,000, with just one Police Point (*nuktit shorta*). In parliamentary elections it had been considered the centre of an electoral district (*dai'ra intikhabia*), with two members in the People's Assembly. At that time, the town was formally administrated by a Local Unit (*al-wihda al-mahaliyya*) and a

[21] For more details regarding urbanization legislation in Egypt, see: (Sims, 2008)

Local Council (*al-majlis al-mahali*). The first was an executive municipal apparatus, which was responsible for most public services, while the second was a representative board elected by Kerdasa inhabitants, though its authority was extremely limited. Both institutions representing the municipal machinery in the town were affiliated to the Governorate of al-Giza. They were intended, by virtue of their structure and existence, to comprise the local government in Kerdasa. However, in the Cairo outskirts (as in much of Egypt), local governance is actually dispersed among many institutions affiliated to both the governorate and to national-level ministries.

The transformation of Kerdasa from a village to a city was a formal recognition that was the result of a long historical process of urbanization. However, this recognition came quite late, since the town prior to that had, for the greater part, been urbanized from the mid-1990s, if not earlier. Since the mid-1980s, Kerdasa has been a service centre for a large part of the surrounding areas, embracing factories, clinics, an agrarian bank, many schools, and hundreds of workshops (Habashi, 1982, pp. 306–10). By 1995, the town included a business school, hundreds of both formal and informal firms, and had become surrounded by a belt of informal houses. Its inhabitants had also started to become as familiar with *baltajiya* (street criminals) as those of any typical Egyptian medium-size city.[22] It was not only Kerdasa that experienced such a transition at this time. For example, its neighboring 'village', Nahia, also made a significant advance towards urbanization in the same period, but was not recognized as a city. This was because 'urbanization' in Egypt (and perhaps

[22] Various interviews conducted in September 2012 and March 2016.

anywhere else) was a political phenomenon and should be viewed as such.[23] As this chapter will show, urbanization is the result of long-term socio-political negotiations and manoeuvres between local agencies and the state, whereby local social agents act collectively to seize their right to be 'urbanized'.

The main aim of this chapter is to uncover the socio-political mobilization that partly led to this recognition. I will argue that, in the Mubarak era, both the local administration and the local NDP in Cairo's peri-urban fringe can be viewed as an outcome of the rationalization of collective political socio-political practices that were shaped and influenced by neighbourhoodism. This was accompanied by the establishment of local politics as a political field. The evolution of local bureaucracy and the regime's political apparatuses and networks have to be viewed simultaneously, as a statist strategy to capture socio-political mobilization at the local level, and must been seen as products of the interaction between the state and local society.

This requires to examine the context in which the System of Local Administration (SLA) functioned in Greater Cairo's peri-urban fringe, and its relationship with the role that the NDP played in socio-political mobilization. By examining the case of Kerdasa, this analysis will demonstrate how the NDP was not just a political cover for local political elites, through which it monopolized local politics by representing the only formal public sphere. It was also a deep-rooted network that bridged local communities and the state, and represented an attempt to rationalize the new trend in politics that was shaped by neighbourhoodism. The

[23] Warren Magnusson, for example, calls for a "shift from the state to the city". The state captured our political imaginary as the vehicle of politics, while politics of the city was overlooked. (Magnusson, 2013, p. 122)

NDP, as this chapter will show, was able to act as a glue between the state's various institutions, binding them to each other. In addition, this chapter will be skeptical with respect to the widespread assumption that the NDP was composed of clientelist groups, that is, a series of profiteers associated with executive apparatuses, who sought protection in return for their services and loyalty to the Egyptian regime. Conversely, it will be argued that such a rent-seeking logic must be based on a cognitive social structure that makes clientelism meaningful politically. The NDP in its localities represented a new empowered sector of the local community, which was spurred on by neighbourhoodism and came to play a vital role in the political field. In the Cairo peri-urban fringe, the NDP represented a type of political mobilization that can be viewed as a historical social process that was responsible for localizing the bifurcated state.

Nevertheless, although the NDP was effective in this way, other factors caused a general breakdown of its hegemony. Both this chapter, and the following one, will propose an explanation of the reasons behind the failure of the NDP when it came to political mobilization on a broader scale. While the NDP was quite successful at mobilizing citizens locally, it lacked any means of doing so on the national level. This situation created a structural paradox: the party was strong and popular enough in each locality, but it could not translate its strengths into public support at the national level. This was because the party could not produce an ideology during the Mubarak era that could forge a connection between the local and the national.

2.1 The Rule of Fragmentation: The System of Local Administration in the Mubarak Era

What often comes to mind when we think about local governance is the mode by which local authorities, whether elected or not, allocate resources and deliver public goods and services to their localities. Nevertheless, 'governance' is a very ambiguous term and it is not universally established in social sciences. In fact, many analysts have suggested that the rise of the concept of "good governance" was ideological. It has been associated with neoliberalism and the trend towards a "depoliticisation of public affairs to the benefit of a purely technocratic vision" (Olivier de Sardan, 2011, p. 22). A strong emphasis on partnership and networks, rather than top-down national government, and a call for the involvement of actors from the private economic sector, NGOs, religious groups, and community action groups, has been associated with the retreat of the national state (Jessop, 2012, p. 467).

In Egypt, however, researchers have been preoccupied with the study of local governance for a different reason. In brief, they have tried to elaborate how the centralized nature of the Egyptian state, and the reluctance of ruling coalitions to share power with wider segments of society, has inhibited any significant vision of decentralization, and has limited the ability of the local community to act as a vehicle of development (Ayubi, 1991, pp. 123–133; Moustafa, 2002). The SLA in Egypt has been accused of stifling local agency by concentrating authority in the hands of the governor and his appointed executive councils, as opposed to the limited functions of elected local councils (Fahmy, 2012, p. 197). The key to understanding the subordination of local community representation (embodied in the institution of local councils), according to this school of thought, has been the "tight control, which the central government exerts on provincial budgets and on decision-making, [which]

makes the provinces an appendage of the central government rather than autonomous representative units" (Ibid.).

This situation, we are told, has resulted in weak and fragmented local elites, who at best have sought to become trusted clients and to appease their patrons in the central government and executive apparatuses. The model of patronage politics has dominated our understanding of the relations between the local and the national to the extent that it does not allow agents at the local level to have any say in their affairs, or to take any significant socio-political action. This chapter's analysis will agree that the SLA in Egypt has been highly centralized and is arbitrary in its structure, insofar as it consolidates power in the executive apparatuses. However, this has not necessarily led to weak and subordinated local agents. In fact, this chapter will argue the opposite. Precisely because the Egyptian system of local governance suffered from fragmentation, ambiguity, structural deficiencies and over-centralization, it also made the Mubarak-era local elites, at the grassroots level, in Cairo's peri-urban fringe a socio-political force to be reckoned with.

The assumption that an overcentralized local system would lead to a weakening of local social forces is a misreading of the nature of the system itself. Most observers have noted that the SLA was gradually structured in such a way as to grant the executive branch superiority over the elected one. In the Mubarak era, the local government for any municipal unit (e.g. city, town, village, etc.)[24] consisted of two separated bodies. The first was the Local Unit (*wehda mahalliya*), which enjoyed as much power and authority as any possible

[24] Not every town has a Local Unit. Satellite towns and small villages are usually affiliated to Local Units based in larger cities or towns.

municipal institution. All of its staff, including its chair, were appointed by either the governor or the prime minister. On the other hand, the elected branch of the smallest unit (the village) was represented by the Local Council (*al-majlis al-mahalli*). The elected branch of a city and capital of its district (*markaz wa madina*) should also have a Popular Council (*al-majlis al-sha'bi)*, alongside the Local Council. In general, each local executive institution, at the lower levels, was to be paralleled by an elected local institution.

Since their foundation in the early 1980s, elected councils have never been endowed with any important constitutional authority, with the exception of the right of *istigwab* (monitoring and questioning). Nevertheless, this right was advisory rather than mandatory, since there has always been an executive institution responsible for mediating between both branches of local governance. Prior to 1988, the governorate took this role according to Law 43 of 1979, although its regulations stipulated that local councils had the right to monitor and question (*istigwab*) the governorate itself. In 1988, a new amendment was introduced giving the Ministry of Local Development the final decision in such disputes. In 2008, a new and (in theory) improved bill was discussed in the People's Assembly but never adopted (Law 84 of 1996; see also: (El Hag, 2014).

It is easy, in the light of this structure, to conclude that the system had no semblance of actual local governance. Theoretically, to become an elected member of a Local Council was not worth the trouble, as this post was honorary and practically unpaid.[25] Even in the late Mubarak era, when the Egyptian media and many civil society organizations continuously attacked corrupt practices in the system of local governance, they rarely targeted its elected

[25] A member of the Local Council was paid 10 LE monthly.

branch. They reprehended the executive branch specifically, and especially the *wehdat mahalliyya* (Local Units), which were theoretically authorized to utilize local resources (most importantly, land and real estate) for the public good rather than for private gain. Those who occupied the highest ranked posts in this institution were often not actually 'locals', but rather were executive chiefs appointed from the army and the Ministry of Interior. In short, they belonged to the state itself and not the local representative bodies (CIPE, 2012; Egati, 2012). As a result, those who occupied the most sensitive and strategic administrative positions in the SLA, which allowed them to have great access to the public resources, were not able to compete in the political field. This is either because they needed formal or informal approval from their superiors in the army or police, or because they were not locals and, therefore, were unable to mobilize grassroots on the local level.

On the other hand, the local NDP, which were able to mobilize grassroots on the local level through many ways, had to compete in Local and Popular Councils' elections (the representative branch of the SLA) although these councils had no legal authority. In practice, local council elections in the Mubarak era witnessed a fierce competition among local elites. Thousands of local figures in Egypt devoted their own economic or social resources to guarantee a place on the council. This can be observed in a report published by the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement (EACPE), which documented a number of incidents that took place in the local council elections in March 2008. The report noted dozens of violations of the electoral law, including fights between candidates and police involvement to prevent certain candidates from campaigning. The security forces were accused of tampering with ballot boxes. They were also witnessed turning a blind eye

on *baltagiya*, who were hired by many candidates to prevent their opponents' voters from reaching voting stations (EACPE, 2008).[26]

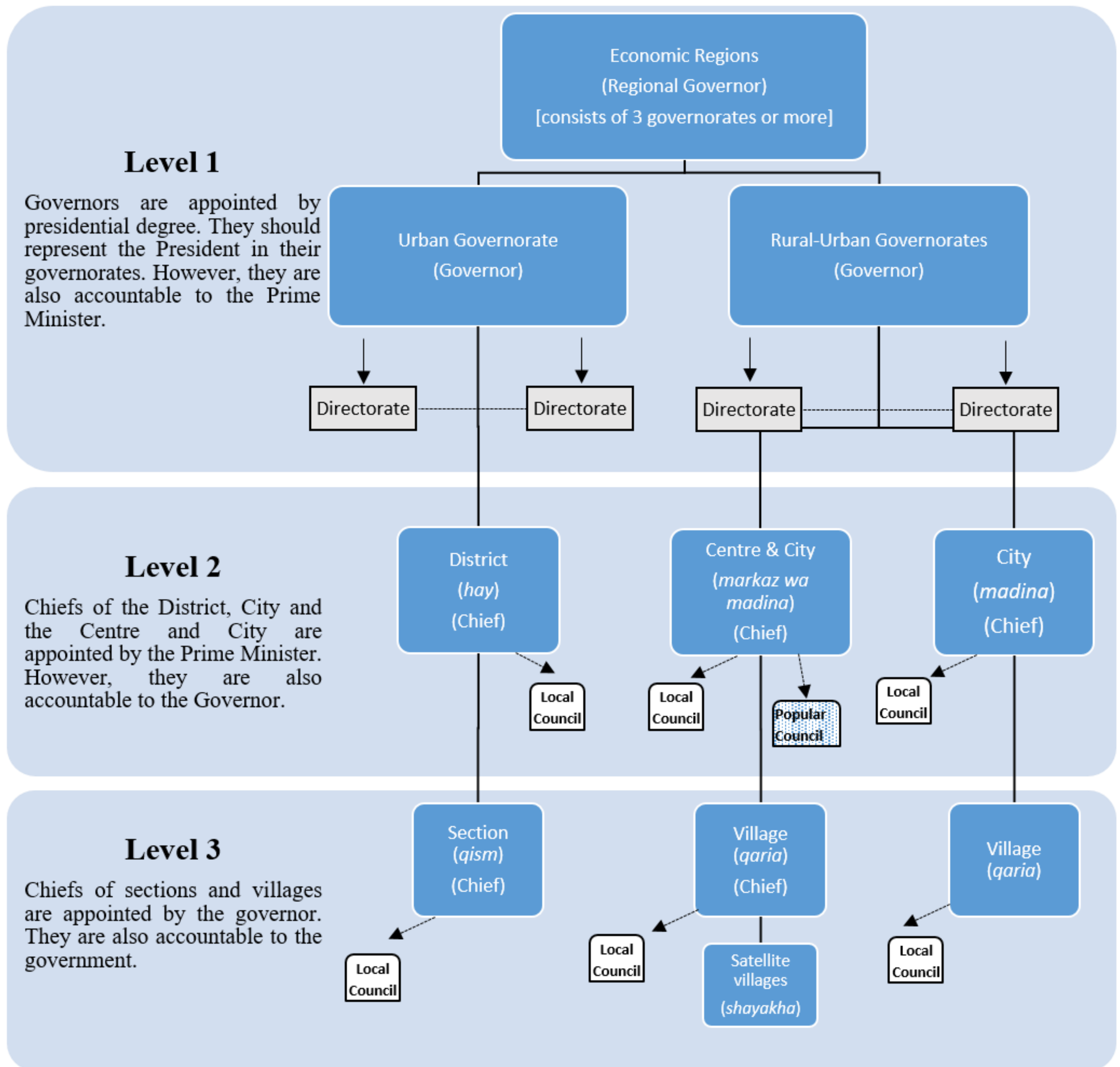
It is not rational that social agents would engage in such fierce competition, deploy their personal economic and social resources, and embroil themselves in criminal acts in order to gain positions that were not influential, or which offered no socio-economic benefit. Hence, this chapter's analysis will suggest that previous interpretations of the SLA's role have been incomplete, and have failed draw a comprehensive picture of the system by which localities were governed in the Mubarak era. Most studies of Egyptian local government – including reports sponsored by USAID and other international organizations[27] – have focused on the formal system, the lower level of which has been briefly detailed above. As observed, if this system were isolated and examined separately, it would be intuitive to assume that representative local bodies were weak and powerless. That assumption, however, neglects the fact that the structure of the SLA in the era of Mubarak was quite complex, composed of different formal and informal subsystems, which all drew their strength from this larger context.

The following diagram gives an outline of the SLA in Egypt from 1988 through to the January 25 Revolution. As can be observed, the system roughly consists of three levels. Each person in Level 1, such as the members of the governorates' executive councils, was

[26] Chapter 4 will also observe how the competition over the local positions has been intensive by local agents who deployed variety of strategies, social capitals and symbolic violence in their struggle.

[27] For a comprehensive evaluation of the USAID, and the efforts of other international organizations to support decentralization in Egypt, see: (Mayfield, 2012, pp. 101–134)

appointed either by the governorate or by the prime minister. Usually, each executive council consisted of members that represented all directorates (*mudiryyat*). The directorate (*mudiriyya*) is an institutional unit assigned by its mother-ministry that takes orders from both the governor and the ministry. Theoretically, the governor has constitutional power over the directorates. Appointed by presidential degree, the governor should represent the president in the executive council, but he is also accountable to the prime minister. Most research on local governance in Egypt has tended to agree that in the Mubarak era, the governor was the most powerful man in his jurisdiction. This assumption is correct in theory, but in practice, however, that power depended on the governor's personality and the extent of the real power held by ministries and the chiefs of directorates over a given period.



Source: Law 52, Year 1975. Law 43, Year 1979. Law 145, Year 1988. Law 84, Year 1996.

The system itself allowed for the shifting of power from one entity to another, because its most fundamental characteristic was the "dual control principle" – an insistence that "central ministries will still have significant technical and professional supervisory powers and responsibilities over their staff assigned to governorates." (Mayfield, 1996, p. 89; Moharram, 1992, p. 477). This principle was also applied on the other levels of the system. In fact, all chiefs in Level 2 were appointed by the prime minister, although they also took their orders from the governorate, whereas all chiefs in Level 3 were assigned by the governorate, but could also be accountable to directorates (in Level 1), which were accountable to both the central government and the governorate. For example, the chair of City A_1 in Level 2 could be summoned by an executive secretary in Governorate A, but he might also take orders from Directorate A_1. In turn, Directorate A_1 could be questioned by its mother-ministry or by Governorate A. Each chief, at any level, might have multiple connections with numerous entities on any other level.

This situation firstly led to a normalizing of contradictions in the process of decision-making among many entities. It also gave most units at each level the opportunity to make alliances against others within the same structure. Because each executive official had multiple loyalties to numerous institutions in the SLA, the system not only reinforced a struggle for power and fragmentation within this structure, but actually produced it. This partly explains why the era of Mubarak was marked by fierce contestation among groups of cronies *(shilal,* singular: *shilla)* who competed for power (Moore, 1977; Springborg, 1979). According to Robert Springborg and Clement Moore, *shilal* established a shadow "patrimonial rule" through which these groups would compete to exploit public spoils that they could not access legally. (Ibid.) According to John Waterbury, the system of *shilla*s was one instrument of

control that was not dominant (in the 1970s), but was still important in understanding the Egyptian polity (Waterbury, 1983, pp. 46–7). “The *shilla* is a legal gang exploiting the gaps in the existing legal system to its own interest”, as Waterbury put it (al-Sawi, 1977). However, I would suggest that the *shilal* might be the natural outcome of a system that was historically designed to constrain every official, except the President, by a network of power centres.

;p–ºeach institution inside the system was accountable to multiple institutions, and took orders from different entities, many administrative chiefs at each level became reluctant to take developmental initiatives in their localities. This was due to the difficulty they faced in convincing more than one boss at the upper level to approve their ideas, or to provide support if plans went wrong. As Mayfield has stated: “since it is not clear who should be doing what, few are willing to take responsibility for any decision that may prove to be against the law or subject to administrative penalties” (Mayfield, 1996, p. 118). One consequence of this was the importance given to factors other than the positions of chiefs in the structure. These factors included the chief’s personality and their ability to manoeuvre and cultivate connections within the system, as well as their ability to lobby and put pressure on decision makers. In other words, it did not only matter where you were in the system, but also who you were.

In this context, we can understand why local elites in the Mubarak era tended to struggle and compete over local councils, despite their limited constitutional authority. Being an elected member in a local council might be symbolic, but it might also offer a very important role to someone capable of an ‘out of the box’ political initiative. This was particularly true if someone with a local council position worked hard to lobby and put pressure on chiefs in

the local administration system to undertake responsibilities they may have neglected, even though they were obliged to accept them by law. In fact, as will be discussed later, members of the Local Councils in Cairo's peri-urban fringe, especially the chairs or their deputies, played significant roles in bridging the SLA's institutions and driving them to take actions that contributed to the development of their towns and local public amenities. Here, one of most significant roles that the NDP played from the late 1980s, as the following section will argue, was to organize this process and to guarantee that those who occupied elected positions should not only be loyal to the regime, but also, most importantly, that they should take this mission seriously.

This is why any interpretation of the role of the SLA in Egypt should also include the NDP, which was an informal extension of it that represented the actual local element in the system. The NDP in the Mubarak era, as the following section will show, was the link that increasingly localized the administrative 'external' government. However, as we will see, this process could not happen without the rise of a new wave of local agents, with a different vision and new attitudes towards their social spaces that came to compete over the political field. The whole system, in this sense, was an institutional attempt to rationalize and bureaucratize this tendency.

2.2 Rationalizing Neighbourhoodism and the Development of Local Politics

As we have seen, although the SLA in the Mubarak era was formally overcentralized, it was also marked by fragmentation and an intense competition between cronies at all levels. The principles of decision-making and receiving orders worked to limit vertical control to a large extent, and allowed units at the lower levels to harness the system for their own local

interests, regardless of their constitutional authority. However, it may not be possible to understand how the SLA at its lower levels (the level of towns) functioned without acknowledging the role that the NDP played in the political field. From the mid-1980s until the January 25 Revolution, the NDP in Cairo's peri-urban fringe, as this section will argue, represented the most significant 'informal' link that localized the SLA. This was mainly shown in the NDP's responsibility for not only organizing the recruitment of local figures to the local councils, but also for guaranteeing that those who occupied the elected branch of the SLA were qualified for their posts.

From its foundation in 1978, the NDP inherited most of the roles that had been previously assigned to the Arab Socialist Union (ASU). The ASU was created by Nasser to be the sole political party and as a means of gathering mass support. The assumption was that the populist regime was nurturing a new stable middle class "without which the rulers cannot rule" (Binder, 1978, p. 20,26). By the end of the 1960s, the rural middle class in their localities, and in the public sector, constituted a large proportion of the new social base for the regime (Ansari, 1986, p. 233). In the 1970s, as Hazem Kandil has stated, "social groups could no longer perceive themselves independently of the state; they could develop organically only within it" (Kandil, 2012, p. 159). According to Kandil, Sadat desired a loyal social base that owed nothing to Nasser (Ibid., p.158). Thus, he managed through his policies to create a new political elite:

> a veritable pyramid with state-nurtured capitalists on top, old ASU cadres and their rural allies in the middle, and state employees and workers (who either made gains as middlemen or lacked skills to survive outside the public sector) at the base. The new political alliance was stronger than ever. For the first time since 1952, it combined society's real economic elite with bureaucratic officials and political cadres. What was needed now

> was a political vessel through which Sadat could shore up their support. Hence, the National Democratic Party (NDP) was born. (Ibid., p.156)

Sadat and Mubarak had their reasons for empowering the ruling party, most important among which was their desire to curb the army and to rein in its weight inside the regime (Abdalla, 1988, p. 1455). To achieve such a new equilibrium, however, needed time to crystallize, and was not possible without augmenting the power of security apparatuses. Sadat initiated the process of militarizing the police, but it was only in the first decade of Mubarak's tenure that the foundations of the contemporary Egyptian police state were truly laid down.[28]

However, this political transformation inside the state was at variance with the trend in Egyptian official discourse that encouraged decentralization. Remarkably, both the NDP and the SLA were born in the same period. In fact, many studies have observed that the SLA actually inherited the structure and ethos of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) (Ansari, 1986, pp. 114–115).[29] This is why it is not possible to distinguish between the political and the administrative in the Egyptian context. It is noticeable that the Egyptian local bureaucracy to a large extent evolved from the structure and practices of the ruling party in the Nasser era. Thus, it can be argued that the SLA was not a set of municipal institutions, but rather

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[28] Many accounts have uncovered and documented the role played by the police in the Mubarak era, which reached into every corner of the state and economy and even the private lives of the populace. Egyptian opposition figures also explicitly criticized the securitization of the state and society (*amnanatu al-dawla wal mujtama'*) in public. See: (Bishara, 2016, pp. 139–140; Rashed, 2016; Tadros, 2011).

In his account, Ayubi observed that "An Institute of Local Administration was established in Cairo in 1968 for training local personnel and councilors. By the end of the sixties the relation between executive local units and the ASU became also more clear." (Ayubi, 1980, pp. 210–211)

the effect of an accumulation of administrative policies that were intended to manage a political group. Nazih Ayoubi scrupulously described this tendency as “the bureaucratization of politics”, whereby the Egyptian state tended to substitute bureaucrats for politicians (Ibid., pp.444-445). In this context, it is noticeable that both the SLA and the NDP were in essence a bureaucratization of the ASU.

Although the structure of local governance was, implicitly or explicitly, mentioned vaguely in the Constitution of 1960, the 1978 Constitution introduced a clear formula (though also quite general) that put this structure into effect. From a socio-economic vantage point, this section will stress the relation between the evolution of both the SLA and the NDP, suggesting that the reason behind the decision to lean towards decentralization was not only Egypt’s adoption of the recommendations of international organizations, as has been previously argued. It was also due to an essential transformation, albeit gradual, inside the authoritarian regime that moved it towards a rationalization of neighbourhoodism. This was an evolution of the norms of governmentality, in the Foucauldian sense, to capture and bureaucratize the new socio-political practices that involved a politicization of space.

In Kerdasa, elites became aware of the importance of local councils in the mid-1980s. Mohammad Abdel Wahhab Mahjoub was the third person to be elected as Head of the Local Council in 1984, following Mahmoud Fahmi Mikkawi[30] and Yousef Abdel Salam Saleh.[31] Mahjoub has stated that in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the only local positions acknowledged by Kerdasians were the *umda* (on account of its historical status rather than

[30] On Mahmoud Fahmi Mikkawi’s role and political life, see Section 1.3.1 in Chapter 1. See also Chapter 4.

[31] The role played by Yousef Abdel Salam Saleh will be discussed in Chapter 4.

its real authority) and the town's member in parliament (Mahjoub, Interview). This was simply because the notion that local positions should be occupied by locals had not yet been established. People were generally accustomed to wait for political decisions to be made in Cairo. Even ASU officials, while they could help to facilitate the recruitment of their friends or relatives in the public sector, could probably not guarantee the area in which their acquaintances would serve (Ibid).

Another factor relevant to this dynamic is that the 'sense of space' had not yet been developed to the extent that Kerdasians, and others from similar areas, were particularly invested in the development of their localities. People were raised on the notion that they might move anywhere in search of jobs and even different lifestyles. In the pre-Mubarak era, Egypt had witnessed large waves of internal migration (rural-urban and urban-urban). In Cairo's peri-urban fringe, it was common for many young families to leave their home town and resettle in a location near to where they worked. Many of them did so looking for privacy, or moved to the new purpose-built neighbourhoods in the desert that suited their aspirational social ambitions.[32]

Fortunately, we have a governmental study of one of the first local assemblies in Kerdasa that clearly shows this phenomenon. This study, based on a survey conducted in 1982,

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[32] I was told by members of al Mikkawi family that prior to the 1980s, the Mikkawis had extensively moved away from the town. They sold most of their land to other families from the town, or from outside of it, for this purpose. (Moa'taz Mikkawi, Interview). Al-Mikkawi had been one of the most established families in Kerdasa, and obviously, the sense of locality within its members had been blurred prior to the 1980s, as we saw in Chapter 1. (Moath Mikkawi, Interview). For further discussion on this topic, see Chapter 4.

examined twenty-one meeting minutes of the Consultative Committee for Population and Development (CCPD), from October 1978 to May 1980. This committee was established pursuant to Law 52, Year 1975, and consisted of thirty-two members from both the elected and executive branches. Twelve of them were elected members in the Local Council; five were appointed and fifteen were employees in the Local Unit. The study noticed that regular attendance rates were high in all meetings, with an average of 87%. However, the survey noted that regular attendance among the elected members (who were locals) was very low, at approximately 22%. The study attributed the low attendance of elected members to the poor motivation among locals, due to the "old history" that established a sense among them that "popular work is not effective" (Hefny, 1983, pp. 49–50). Furthermore, the study revealed that the value of all projects implemented by the CCPD "was L.E. 65,480, out of which a total of L.E. 15,300 was paid by the people of Kerdasa" while the rest was funded by the government. The money contributed by Kerdasians went mainly towards the repair of mosques (L.E. 10,800, or 70.59% of the total cost), while the rest of this money went towards education, water, electricity and other small projects (Ibid., pp.57-58).[33]

From the 1980s, however, the net rural-to-urban migration diminished greatly. The population growth of Greater Cairo was almost completely explained by "natural increase and expanding boundaries, with net in-migration almost at zero" (Sims, 2010, p. 32). According to David Sims, this indicated that people now generally tended to settle down in

[33] Apart from mosques, which were repaired through local charity, the rest of the local services, as many interviewees confirmed, were mostly funded by donations from Mahmoud Fahmi Mikkawi, who was the head of the Local Council at that time, which was the first Local Council in Kerdasa. We will discuss Mahmood Fahmi's motivations in Chapter 4.

their localities or nearby (Ibid.). Scholarship has suggested many reasons for this trend, one of which has been the development of the national transportation networks, which made commuting to work feasible. Other factors, such as affordable housing and the commercialization of the city centre are also considered important (Sims, 2008). Nevertheless, whether it was a political decision or just a coincidence, both the NDP and the SLA were founded at the very time when patterns of migration had fundamentally changed, and local communities had begun to show a 'stay-at-home' inertia, investing economically and politically in their localities, while also producing figures who represented their social spaces.

To put it differently, it can be said that in this period (the late 1970s and the early 1980s), local politics in Cairo's peri-urban fringe had begun to develop its foundations of its later emergence as a political 'field', in Bourdieu's sense. Local people began to realize that political work was possible at the local level of their villages and towns. However, as the rest of this chapter will show, in that relatively early period the political field was characterized by very limited competition, not only because it was still nascent, but also due to the absence of rising lesser notables, which we will address extensively in Chapter 4. Competitiveness in the political field had to wait until the early 1990s, with the rise of lesser notables in waves due to a deep transformation of local economies. This intensive rise of empowered lesser notables led to the development of strategies among position holders that drew on social, political and cultural capital and generated forms of symbolic violence. The establishment of local politics as a political field was accompanied by the consolidation of neighbourhoodism as a habitus, leading to a politicization of social spaces.

This chapter argues that it was the NDP, more any other entity that succeeded in coping with this trend and in capturing the new segment of lesser notables who had started to flaunt their relationship with their localities. In Cairo's peri-urban fringe, and perhaps in other regions of Upper and Lower Egypt, those social agents who had been motivated by neighbourhoodism became firmly established, respected and highly popular. Some of them, in fact, were able to compete with established politicians in the ASU,[34] or other groups in their constituencies. Others joined (or were coopted by) opposition parties, such as the MB, or the Wafd, and many other groups. Nevertheless, most of them chose (or were chosen) to join the ranks of the NDP for two reasons. Firstly, because they had no history of political involvement. They were not known to be politically engaged in the ideological sense, or more accurately, they had defined politics differently, in spatial terms, and in terms of how it connected with local people's everyday life. In other words, they were local figures who had a technocratic vision of life, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Secondly, and most importantly, it made sense for them to join the ruling party, as it was the sole path to accessing state resources, which they needed to implement their developmental agendas. In Kerdasa, to join the NDP was viewed by them as following 'the order of things'; it was an essential step for any individual to wanted to have a say in local politics. In the words of Ismail Abu Musa, a veteran member of Kerdasa's NDP: "*kol el-balad kanat hizb watani* (everybody was [a member of the] NDP)." (Ismail Abu Musa, Interview).

[34] One example was Hasan Hafez, who was an ASU veteran from the Nasser era. He later occupied numerous high ranking positions in the NDP and in government (Different interviews).

Scholarship on Egyptian authoritarianism, however, has not viewed NDP membership from this angle. Many analyses, in fact, do not fully understand the motivations of NDP members. They do not see that 'social space' itself can play a role in the production of politics, and that it was the leading principle that sincerely motivated many NDP members. Instead, research has tended to view local NDP leaders as 'opportunists' and 'profiteers', who seek to climb the social ladder by getting close to decision makers. They are also represented in this way by Egypt's popular culture, which has surely influenced many observers. According to this view, the NDP grassroots – at their best – were clients who swore loyalty to their patrons in the higher ranks in return for personal protection, for turning a blind eye to their 'informal practices', or in hope of being rewarded in material ways. Lisa Blaydes systematically worked on this premise. Not only does she argue that the Egyptian regime used elections as a means of elite management and rent distribution;[35] she has also suggested that elections in the Mubarak era provided the authoritarian leadership with what was perceived as an even-handed way to decide which areas should receive state allocations, and which could be neglected (Blaydes, 2010, p. 5). Because the state's resources had become increasingly strained over time through economic liberalization, Blaydes argues that elections were needed to manage and update the class of individuals who might be eligible for spoils in exchange for their support (Ibid., p.283).

It is worth mentioning, however, that the state's resources in Egypt in the 1990s had not become constrained. They were actually reallocated, since the state's priorities were re-directed towards an upward redistribution of wealth. As Timothy Mitchell puts it: "The

[35] Which is indeed one of the aims of elections almost everywhere!

financial reforms that followed [the crisis of 1990-1] were not so much an elimination of state support (as the neoliberal version of events would have it), but rather, a change in recipients" (Mitchell, 2002, p. 277). Blaydes' argument has shifted the rent-seeking model, which has been used to understand politics among groups of cronies in or around the state (which was unquestionably a reality), and used it to understand socio-political mobilization at the local level. Hence, according to this approach, what was happening on the upper level should be also mirrored in society.

Blaydes has reached her conclusions by using a quantitative method. She has noticed that the areas where people voted for the NDP were the most likely to be rewarded after the election, and that "voting for opposition candidates might reduce districts' access to public funding for infrastructural development" (Blaydes, 2010, p. 75). It is not clear, however, why Blaydes has ruled out the possibility that the elected MPs might have simply worked harder to convince the state and local communities to develop infrastructure in their constituencies. This is despite her observation in the same study of the emergence of "super-MPs", those who "used their personal wealth to pay ministries to build infrastructure in their districts" (Ibid., p.76). As one of her interviewees said: "parliamentarians have had to work harder than ever before to extract any kind of development assistance from the government" (Ibid.). Blaydes did not infer from the latter statement that local leaders could be sincere in their political actions as she already had her own explanation. She simply pre-viewed the NDP grassroots through the patronage politics model, even though many of those supposed to be clients were not receiving the degree of protection or share in rents that the "super-MPs" were gaining. On the contrary, for many of the "ordinary MPs", being active in local politics had little economic gain.

This is not to say that patronage politics is irrelevant to the study of Egyptian politics at the local level. Indeed, neopatrimonialism theory is indispensable in approaching the way power has been exercised in Egyptian society. Starting from the 1970s, neopatrimonialism in Egypt was established as a "system of rule in which a top figure within the state hierarchy governs mainly through a network of personal and informal relations" (Bank and Richter, 2010). Members of the political elite are recruited on the basis of their political loyalty to the central figure and "only secondarily on the basis of other criteria such as performance or competence" (Ibid.). To avoid the emergence of alternative power bases, the neopatrimonial ruler has to balance different elite segments by *divide-et-impera* and elite rotation or circulation. "The two bases of legitimation in neopatrimonial regimes are *traditional loyalty* (loyalty based on family heritage and religion) and *material rewards* through the allocation of jobs, grants, licenses etc. The latter aspect connects studies of neopatrimonialism to political-economic rentier approaches" (Ibid.).

However, a neopatrimonial framework cannot by itself elaborate the ways in which local communities were mobilized socio-politically. Researchers in Egyptian politics have become aware that political-economic rentier approaches, though important, have lost their analytical capacity over time, especially with the economic opening (*infitah* of the 1970s and 1980s) and subsequent liberalization. As mentioned above, Lisa Blaydes has interpreted Egyptian elections as an authoritarian mechanism for distributing resources in the context of Egyptian version of economic liberalization. This has meant that due to limited resources, the state has started to upgrade the neopatrimonial system to become more functional and sophisticated. However, as chapter 4 will show, this logic is useful but is not enough to understand political mobilization in Cairo's peri-urban fringe. While the NDP indeed

adapted its systems of managing local elites, this was not due to limited resources, but rather was owing to the rise of a new wave of empowered lesser notables, who sought to work within the NDP fold when the existing structure could not accommodate them.

By contrast, Samer Soliman suggests that the Egyptian state began a deep transformation starting in the mid-1980s. The decline of external rentier revenues transformed the state from a "rentier state" to a "predatory state". Soliman has adopted Margaret Levi's framework, which argued that in the context of declining rentier rule, the state turns back to sections of society to exploit them economically (Levi, 1989, chap. 11). In the case of Egypt, as Soliman argues, the regime firstly forced unconstitutional taxes on sections of the Egyptian population, and secondly pressured its "loyal base in the business community" to fund many projects in the state's welfare system (Soliman, 2011, p. 127). Thirdly, the regime

> turned its sights to the Egyptian people and slowly made the transition from a rentier state to a predatory one. A predatory state is a state that sets income generation above all other considerations, one that will do anything to rake in more money from society regardless of whether that necessitates unconstitutional means and even if it wreaks havoc on the economy. (Ibid., p.97)

Soliman's model is only useful for understanding the NDP's politics since the mid-2000s, when the Egyptian regime turned its back on the NDP veterans, who saw new 'arrivals' appear on the political scene with only money to back them and with little knowledge of the localities that they represented. However, as chapter 4 and 5 will show, these new 'arrivals' were regarded by the NDP grassroots as 'outsiders', and in the long term they had a disastrous effect on the regime that would be exposed in January 2011.

However, I argue that both approaches mentioned above (rentier political economy and neopatrimonial theory) have been overused in studying socio-political mobilization in

Egypt. This is because to employ these approaches without placing them in their broader context is to neglect the deep interaction between the state and local communities, which cannot be brought about by the will of the neopatrimonial ruler alone. An overuse of this model, without taking in consideration the social medium that contained it, will run the risk of an oversimplification.

As we discussed in Chapter 1, neopatrimonialism is a universal theory that examines power relations inside the modern institution of power. Patron-client relations are ubiquitous (Landé, 1983, p. 451). They pervade all types of bifurcated states, which have political and administrative systems formally constructed on rational-legal lines. (Clapham, 1985, p. 48). However, clientelism must rest on a self-structuring socio-cultural system of values that makes power relations collectively meaningful. To put it differently, uncovering relationships inside power necessitates a study of the underlying system of values on which power is based. In short, patronage politics as a concept is too loose to explain how power is exercised or negotiated locally.

This is the reason why this study has stressed that a comprehensive social analysis, which seeks to understand political mobilization, should uncover the medium/habitus which different social agencies share, in tandem of studying power relations. This medium/habitus is responsible for shaping and influencing both formal and informal practices, and attaches values to them. In the political field, furthermore, this should be considered as the cognitive structure which is responsible for cultivating the system of values that legitimates clientelist lines, where the contradiction between legitimacy and legality is persisted, building upon Schmitt's distinction (Schmitt, 2004). Again, it is important to acknowledge the significance of the above-mentioned approaches, but when it comes to the local level, it is also important

situate them within a cognitive structure that gives meaning to the agents' political practices. In this study, I propose neighbourhoodism as the dominant *habitus* for the political field in the Cairo peri-urban fringe in the Mubarak era.

In Cairo's peri-urban fringe, local NDP leaders can be viewed locally from another angle. They could be considered a group who were motivated by the tendency of politicizing and objectifying their social spaces. These notables managed to acquire their socio-political status through efforts to develop their villages and towns, and by claims to represent their locality's interests and amenities. It should again be emphasized that the rise of these figures in the 1980s was accompanied by a wider trend among relatively recent migrants to the Cairo outskirts to settle down and live in their localities or nearby. In fact, the vision of the NDP itself, as we will see, became increasingly based on 'servicing local people' (*khedmat ahl el-balad*). This slogan became central to candidates' electoral campaigns for parliament or local councils in the Mubarak era. In fact, during the 2000s and to the present day, local figures in general, and MPs above all, have frequently used this slogan in their day-to-day activities – in their statements to the media, their meetings with local people or public functionaries, and even in their private lives.

This is not to say that all members of the NDP in the Mubarak era belonged to this tendency, but rather to stress that this cohort represented a significant movement inside the ruling party. Nor is this to suggest that this broad social profile was only to be found in the NDP, though it did succeed in capturing most of its support later. In fact, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the Islamic movement in Kerdasa shared the social medium; they were locally rooted and had a tendency of objectifying and politicizing their social spaces, for at least one stage of their political life. In general, the paramount concern that these local agents held in

common was objectifying of their home districts, regardless of their political loyalties. Many of those I interviewed had supported the NDP – not because they were opportunistic or sought political protection, but because a close relationship to the state and its proxies would serve their developmental vision. Nevertheless, in order to gain this 'closeness' to the state, they were compelled to engage in continuously fierce electoral competitions, cultivating local alliances and compacts with different groups including 'Islamists' as will be shown in chapter 3.

In other words, this segment was a horizontal group. It penetrated all political groups from the regime loyalists to the opposition, both formal and informal. In the beginning of the Mubarak era, these were the *infitah* beneficiaries, but from the late 1980s this group also encompassed real estate entrepreneurs who began to join the economic elite, as will be discussed extensively in Chapter 4. By the 2000s, this segment had expanded to the point that it encompassed large numbers of contenders from various backgrounds on the political map of the Cairo peri-urban frontier. The opposition, and many observers, from the 1990s would refer to their candidates for the People's Assembly as *nuwwab al-khadamat* (service deputies). These deputies were those who had leverage or connections with state officials and were able to use their influence with the administration to bring about the development of local infrastructure (El-Shobky, 2005; Blaydes, 2010, p. 56).

In the 2005 parliamentary elections, independent candidates alarmed many observers: they were able to defeat many official candidates of the NDP before the ruling party's leadership could reintegrate them into its ranks. One study noted that the percentage of those who ran as 'independents' for parliament increased significantly, from 40% in 1990 to 65% in 2005. Remarkably, the number of candidates who ran independently without the support of any

party in 2005 was nearly 4300, compared to the 444 who officially ran on the NDP lists, the fewer than 300 from the 'formal' legal opposition, and 150 from the MB (though nominally they also stood as independents) (Zahran, 2006, p. 180). Consequently, the NDP leadership from the 1990 election abandoned the idea of political partisanship (*al-iltizam al-hizbi*). No dissident was expelled or punished, and no membership was frozen. By 2000, the ruling party had officially adopted a new system by which it could reintegrate independents within its ranks (Ibid., p.182).

The rise in the number of candidates who ran independently has been associated with the increasing participation of businessmen in Egyptian politics in general (King, 2009, pp. 94–5; Soliman, 2007). It has been assumed that the last decade of the Mubarak tenure witnessed a marriage of business and politics, which "allowed rising capitalists to entrench themselves deeply in bureaucracy and the ruling party to be purged from above" (Kandil, 2012, p. 209), which was eventually mirrored in parliament (El Tarouty, 2016, chap. 3). However, my analysis will emphasize the need to consider other factors that might also have contributed to the advent of 'independents' in Egyptian elections. The emergence of neighbourhoodism, which entailed politicizing of social spaces, as this chapter argues, drove local communities to put forward their own representatives. These candidates could only run as independents.

The increasing role of business in politics does not explain how the NDP functioned at the grassroots level, at least in Cairo's peri-urban frontier. From my own observations in the field research, it is not clear how the NDP grassroots and business communities interacted in Kerdasa, although they did indeed occasionally interact. Each side seemed to belong to a different world, and most of the time they had nothing to do with each other. In Kerdasa, for example, it was not usual for a local NDP secretary (*amin 'am al-wehda al-hizbiyya*) to be

rich, or even to be a big businessman. Local entrepreneurs, in turn, had no clear interest in having relations with the NDP grassroots. In Kerdasa, in fact, local NDP leaders from the 1980s gained popularity by confronting businessmen who tried illegally to exploit the towns' public resources, which mainly meant public land. As Chapter 4 will show, Sheikh Yousef Abdel-Salam Saleh, the second elected Head of the Local Council and Kerdasa's General Secretary in the 1980s, was known for his efforts to protect a parcel of land belonging to the town's cemetery in the late 1980s. In the 1990s and 2000s, both Mohammad Abdel Wahhab Mahjoub and Mohammad Hasanin Mikkawi (whom we will consider later) claimed that they opposed businessmen from outside Kerdasa who tried to utilize public resources. (Mahjoub, Interview; Mohammad Hasanin Mikkawi, Interview).

In fact, because public opinion from the mid-1980s was sensitive towards the increasing overlap of business and politics, one of the main responsibilities of any local figure was to appear as the town's guardian against corruption, or against those who tried to steal from *ahl el-balad* (townspeople). The latter term has become essential in the language of the public, articulating both people and their space and stressing the pivotal relation between them.[36] In

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[36] In her ethnographic work, Sawsan el-Messiri tried to delineate a group of Egyptians who lived in the popular quarters of Cairo (al-Husayn, al-Sayidah Zaynab, Bulaq and Khan al-Khalili) in the 1960s. *Awlad al-balad*, as they called themselves, were those "indigenous" Egyptians who were not peasants or professionals, and shared cultural habits such as wearing *gallabiyah* (traditional garment) and eating on the ground. They also shared cultural traits such as gallantry (*shahamah*), conservatism, *fahlawah*, joviality and masculinity. El-Messiri's chief concern was to locate the essence of the Egyptian identity, which is problematic since she viewed identity as an assumed given or Primordialism, not as a dialectical dynamism that is constantly changing. However, the importance of her work lies in its observation that residential alleys were more important than the family in

Bourdiean terms, safeguarding social spaces became a sort of political capital. Therefore, every local figure with the ambition to work in local politics was obliged to construct an image of himself as the protector of the town's resources and amenities. This meant that he often invented stories of his standing up to small entrepreneurs and/or claimed that he had saved the town's resources from being stolen. In my interviews with the NDP local figures in Kerdasa, almost everyone claimed that he had defended the town against unknown small businessmen. Nobody, of course, could verify the validity of these claims, but all the battles of which they spoke revolved around land and real estate properties.

Not surprisingly, real estate in Kerdasa has become the heart of social mobility and local politics, a process that began in the late 1980s and has continued up to the present day. As will be shown in Chapter 4, the late 1980s witnessed the rise of real-estate contractors who came to play a very important role in local politics. Here, we can also view this dynamic from another angle. In an environment marked by the socio-political expansion of the real estate sector, in a town that had been comprehensively affected by the urban expansion of the Egyptian capital, the local sense of the importance of lived space and public real estate became central to local politics and to the idea of political representation, a process that led

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providing an identity for *awlad al-balad*, pushing them to organize themselves informally under local leaders (known as *futuwwat*), who were responsible for protecting the interests of their quarter's inhabitants.(Messiri, 1978). Obviously, El-Messiri was referring to a form of spatial politics, or a form of territorialized identity that evolved in the *baladi* quarters of Cairo. This kind of politics had developed earlier in Cairo's popular quarters and would evolve later in the Cairo outskirts (such as Kerdasa) after the establishment of its markets, and also because of the process of urbanization that led most local people to imagine their future as one of remaining in their hometowns.

to the consolidation of neighbourhoodism. Hence, while the local elites in the Cairo peri-urban frontier had been expected to preserve the domestic peace before the 1980s by settling disputes between townspeople, the responsibilities of such figures evolved from the late 1980s to include the protection of social spaces, after objectifying it.[37]

2.3 The Politics of the NDP in Kerdasa

The previous section proposed that both the NDP and the SLA in Cairo's peri-urban fringe can be viewed as a product of the rationalization of neighbourhoodism, thereby leading to the rise of lesser notables who stressed their relations with the social space in the 1980s and 1990s. This section will try to understand the roles that the NDP grassroots played in their localities. I will address this aspect by considering two questions: firstly, why were NDP members until the mid-2000s treated with consideration by both local communities and the Egyptian authorities? Secondly, how could local NDP leaders serve their communities from their position at the local level? The answer to the first question will help us to comprehend why the Egyptian regime, in the Mubarak era, was keen to sustain the ruling party's grassroots, while the second will show us how the role of the NDP was necessary for the SLA to function.

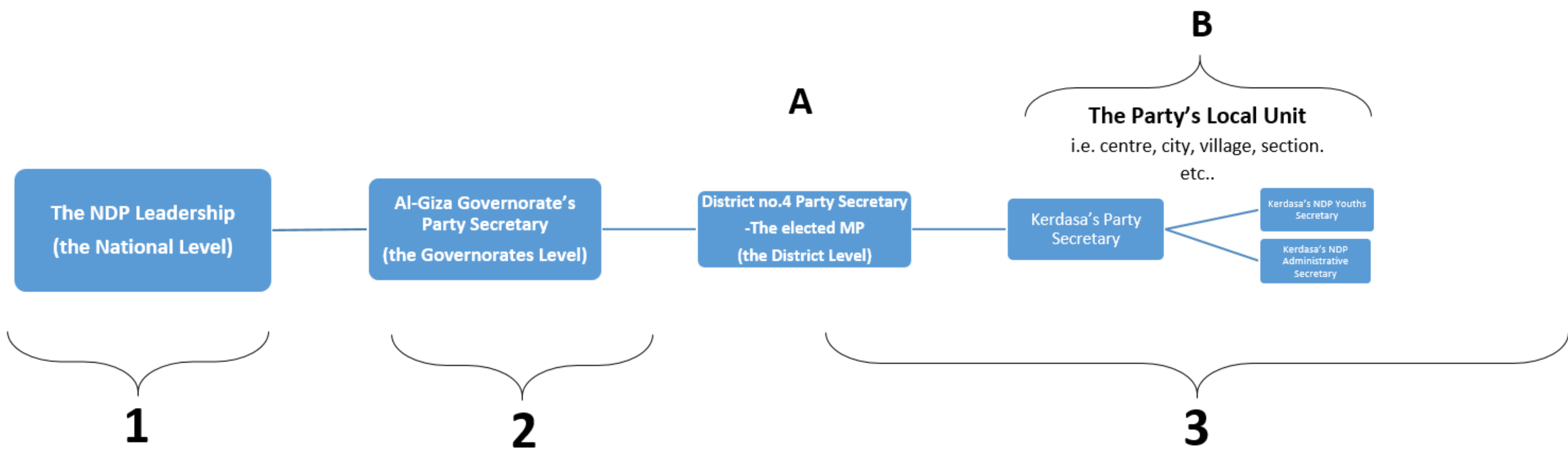
From the late 1980s through to the early 2000s, one of the most important roles played by the NDP in Cairo's peri-urban fringe was to nominate (or to select, more precisely) the members of the Local and Popular Councils *(al-majalis al-mahaliyya wa al-Sha'biyya*) in its constituencies. In fact, as this section suggests, the NDP should be seen as an informal

[37] Chapter 4 will discuss this aspect in detail.

extension of the SLA, in which its members performed a central role in monitoring the system and optimizing it. The SLA during Mubarak's tenure, as described in Section 2.1, was marked by fragmentation in its command and control structure, which frequently led to functional paralysis. In Kerdasa, as will be argued here, the NDP was committed to guaranteeing that the system should be fully optimized.

The structure of the NDP was designed on the same basis as the electoral map. From 1990 to 2005, Egypt was divided into 222 electoral districts, each of which elected two members of the People's Assembly – one had to be a professional (*fia't*), and the other a worker or *fellah*. The president appointed an additional ten members, bringing the total to 454.[38] In the NDP, each electoral district was represented by a General Secretary (GS -*amin a'am*), usually from among the elected MPs who gained the highest votes in their constituencies (Mustafa Jabiri, Interview). While the District's GS was accountable in the party to the Governorate's GS, he was also responsible for the local GSs beneath him, all of whom were accountable to him. The following diagram shows a branch of the NDP's structural tree. As can be observed in the graph below, the NDP consisted of two bodies: the upper body (1 & 2 in diagram) and the lower body or the party grassroots (3 in diagram). The diagram summarizes the chain of ranks and shows the basic characteristics that marked each level from the mid-1980s to the January 25 Revolution.

[38] For the 2010 elections, the last to be held under President Hosni Mubarak, an additional 64 seats were added, all reserved for women, bringing the seat total to 518.



The NDP leadership from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s was dominated by a few ASU veterans (the 'old guard'). In the 2000s, a new group of western-educated young men, academics and businessmen led by Gamal Mubarak rose to compete with the old guard, to eventually become known as the New Guard.

In general, most men in (1) were the pillars of the NDP, and formed Mubarak's inner circle. (*)

The NDP governorates' General Secretaries were appointed by the leadership (1). Each governorate usually had one GS, which was considered a high-ranking position in the party. It can be said that (1+2) were considered the upper body of the NDP. However, those in (2) were replaceable and usually subjected to power centres in the (1), to the extent that one of the reforms proposed by the New Guards was to develop a democratic mechanism to select GSs in the governorates, though this never reached the implementation stage. (**)

This was the lower body of the ruling party, or simply the NDP grassroots. The NDP District sectary (A) was usually the NDP's elected MP of the district (or the NDP candidate if he did not win in the general elections). If there were two members, the one who was more popular (usually because he/she belonged to one of the largest communities in the electoral constituency) would take the position. The district's GS was considered the link between the party grassroots (B) and the leadership. General Secretaries in (A) nominated all GSs in all the Local Units of the party (B) who were all accountable to him. This meant that the MP enjoyed relatively wide powers. After 2003, new reforms were adopted which reduced the MP's power (A) by making the selection to all positions in (B) by elections (in the Electoral College). Hence, from 2003 until the Egyptian revolution, all party positions in (B) acquired influence at the expense of MPs in (A). From then and until the revolution, local members of the NDP became bold enough to bypass the MPs. (***)

References:

(*) Collombier, Virginie. "The Internal Stakes of the 2005 Elections: The Struggle for Influence in Egypt's National Democratic Party." *Middle East Journal* 61.1 (2007): (95-111).

(**) Arafat, Ala' Al-Din. *The Mubarak Leadership and Future of Democracy in Egypt*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.25.

(***) Personal Interviews with various members of the NDP in Kerdasa.

Most studies and analyses on the politics of the NDP have been preoccupied with understanding what was played out at the upper level (1+2 on diagram), and less concerned with understanding what was going on in the party grassroots (3 on the graph), except during election periods, when the entire party was under the pressure of voter mobilization. While the upper and lower bodies seemed to form a coherent and unified organization (until the mid-2000s), they were in reality two different and separated social entities. Prior to 2003, the NDP local body in Kerdasa was rarely aware of party politics beyond their officials in level (A). For example, Mohammad Abdel Wahhab Mahjoub (the NDP's GS of Kerdasa from 1992 to 2003) and Mohammad Hasanin Mikkawi (the NDP's GS of Kerdasa from 2003 until 2011) stated that they had only a vague knowledge of how party politics were managed in the NDP leadership (Mahjoub, Interview; Mohammad Hasanin Mikkawi, Interview).

Even after 2003 and the rise of Gamal Mubarak, they were not able to confirm if the cadres above them in the upper echelons (3-A and 2 on the graph) were loyal to the old or the new guards. From the late 1990s, a new development emerged when the NDP grassroots started to bypass their above cadres and to contact or even to complain to the higher levels of the NDP. For example, in 2003, Abdel Wahhab Mahjoub knew that he would be excluded from the position of local Secretary of the party. Therefore, he set out to reach and appeal to the NDP's GS of al-Giza governorate, Kamal Abu al-Kheir (from level 2 on the graph). As Mahjoub claimed, Abu al-Kheir was assigned by Gamal Mubarak to hold internal elections to elect GSs on the party local level. Mahjoub said that he and his nephew broke into a meeting between Abu al-Kheir and the NDP's MPs from al-Giza, where they brandished

more than two thousand copies of NDP membership badges from Kerdasa, to prove that Abdel-Wahhab was capable enough to remain in his position (Mahjoub, Ibid.).[39]

As a result, Abu al-Kheir divided the position of party secretary of Kerdasa into two secretaries. The first was called the NDP's Secretary of Kerdasa (*amanet* Kerdasa), and the second the NDP's Secretary of New Kerdasa (*amanet* Kerdasa *el-gididah*). This case shows how the NDP grassroots, around the mid-2000s, had started to gain leverage and influence with the NDP intermediaries (i.e. districts' GSs), forcing them to restructure the party organization in a way that considered their socio-economic statuses and power. Hence, Mahjoub's efforts put pressure on the NDP to instil its 'own Secretary' in the town, a position that was considered a 'consolation prize' in Mohammad Hasanin Mikkawi's estimation (Mohammad Hasanin Mikkawi, Interview).

Hasanin Mikkawi claimed that from the beginning of the 2000s, the local GS became less important in ruling party politics. Mikkawi stated that although he was the NDP local GS of Kerdasa from 1996 to 2010, he was aware that this position, especially from the beginning of the 2000s, was less central than it had been before. Mikkawi said that it was not unusual for many towns after the NDP reforms in 2003 to have more than one local GS. He claimed that before the January 25 Revolution, the city of Ausim, for example, had four local GSs who competed for positions such as the Local Council and the Popular Council. The NDP leadership, according to him, granted any NDP member the status of local secretary once he had secured letters of attorney from two hundred NDP members, and his political record was

[39] According to the NDP's statutes, it was sufficient for any local unit (i.e. village, town, section, etc.) to collect 200 letters of attorney to demand the NDP to form a new local secretary.

proven clean (*nazif amnian*) (Ibid.). This was because the NDP had no interest in turning down any figure in a local unit, and knew that many minor notables in villages and towns would seek out any position that might satisfy or enhance their prestigious status within their community (Ibid.; Ismail Abu Musa, Interview). Hence, it can be said that allowing the appointment of multiple GSs in Cairo's peri-urban fringe was a response to the expansion of empowered lesser notables, who had influence on parts of the NDP grassroots and were interested in working in local politics or sought themselves eligible to occupy positions in the political field. According to Hasanin Mikkawi, this was at the expense of the local GS itself, which became more of a ceremonial position.

Mikkawi agreed that the power of the NDP's District GSs (i.e. NDP intermediaries) was declining in the 2000s. However, this was not to the advantage of local GSs on the lower level, but rather for those who had positions on the Local Councils. In al-Mikkawi's words:

> When I decided to work in the public service, I was not particularly worried about the NDP's local secretary position. I was actually interested in running for the Local Council presidency, where I could serve Kerdasa. The NDP's local General Secretary position was not important in itself. It was only a foothold from which the candidate could mobilize his supporters to elect him to the Local Council. (Mohammad Hasanin Mikkawi, Interview).

This is to say that the NDP in Cairo's peri-urban fringe was the only formal public sphere for political mobilization. As the NDP was only an extension of the Egyptian state (Hashim, 2005, p. 85), we can therefore say that the public sphere was in fact part of the state itself. This should be our starting point in understanding the role played by the NDP in Egyptian politics and in socio-political mobilization in general. The stamp of the ruling party was a necessary preliminary to the practice of politics (Mustafa Jabiri, Interview).

As we saw earlier in this chapter, the elected branch of the SLA, which included the local and popular councils, had no significant constitutional power over the executive branch. Nevertheless, as the cases of Abdel Wahhab Mahjoub and Hasanin Mikkawi indicate, lesser notables were in competition, mobilizing local people and devoting resources to run to what were supposed to be 'advisory' positions. Why? The first part of this chapter suggested that although positions in the local councils were *formally* insignificant, they might also have significant *informal* roles, which made them important for local elites.

Firstly, due to the fragmented nature of the SLA (described in Section 2.1), Local Council members were able to acquire influence through utilizing the contradictions within the system. In a system where all executive units at the lower level took orders from different units of the upper level, local council members who theoretically enjoyed nominal authority could possibly move between units and thereby lobby, pressure and drive inactive administrative units to pay some attention, at least, to their local communities' demands and needs.

Abdel Wahhab Mahjoub was one of the first local figures to realize the potential that being Head of the Local Council in Kerdasa might hold. He was able to convince the head of the City of Ausim, and later the governor, to allocate funds to expand Kerdasa's main streets (Mahjoub, Interview).[40] In the first half of the 1990s, through his connections with al-Giza Governorate, he was able to allocate resources for the development of new entrances to the town, for opening new roads, for extending the sewage network and for improving street lighting (Ibid.). During his tenure, the name of the street in which textile stores were located

[40] I was able to verify Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub's claims from different parties.

was changed from Market Street to al-Siyahi Street (‘Tourism Street’). Nevertheless, his most important accomplishment was to pressure the governorate and the central government to reclaim nine *feddans* that had been illegally seized by a private factory in the town (Ibid.). Later, this land would be designated for projects such as a school complex, a vehicle-licensing agency, and a youth centre. In my interview with Abdel Wahhab Mahjoub, he stated that prior to his term, the Head of the Local Council was only expected to keep what he called the ‘domestic peace’ (*al-Silm al-Ahli*). The Head was expected to resolve hostilities between townspeople, to lead reconciliation efforts and settle disputes before the police became involved. In his term, as can be inferred from Mahjoub, the role of the Head of the Local Council significantly evolved to include the lobbying of public institutions and the mobilization of local people to develop Kerdasa’s amenities. Mahjoub, of course, tried to convey this development as a purely personal achievement (Ibid.).

Mahjoub's claims, however, were not wholly without foundation. As indicated in Chapter 1, the role of local notables in rural settings had declined since the late nineteenth century. In the era of Nasser and Sadat, local notables were expected to apply customary law. They were expected to be ‘mediators’, settling disputes between two or more kin groups, between one village and another, or resolving conflicts at marketplaces. They were trusted to resolve disputes over land and inheritance or even within the same household (Zayed, 1998). Mahjoub did indeed introduce a new model. He worked hard, and his ambition can partly explain some of his achievements in Kerdasa. However, his accomplishments can also reflect the hallmark of his time: the rise of lesser notables and their empowerment in the Cairo peri-urban frontier through neighbourhoodism. In an account of the evolution of the SLA, Mayfield has argued that although the Egyptian state has always been criticized for its

overcentralized nature, a study of its bureaucracy indicates that serious efforts were taken over time to facilitate a process of decentralization, albeit slowly (Mayfield, 2012, pp. 117–118). Mayfield argues that it was international pressure and the state's awareness of the need to conduct structural reforms that propelled this initiative (Ibid.). However, this explanation neglects the role played by social actors at the local level. As this chapter has observed, pressure on the state also started at the ground level, from local communities, which from the 1990s began to bargain with the central state over resources and power and to stress their right to administer their own affairs.

In 1996, Abdel Wahhab Mahjoub was selected to become a member of the Governorate Council (*majlis al-mohafaza*). His successor in the Local Council, Mohammad Hasanin Mikkawi, continued to represent the interests of the people of Kerdasa. Hasanin Mikkawi, with Mahjoub's support (in al-Giza governorate), was able to convince the governorate to invest more in Kerdasa's infrastructure, such as the sewage network, the lighting system and street paving (Mohammad Hasanin Mikkawi, Interview).[41] Furthermore, he worked together with the local unit to convince the governorate to invest in public transportation, albeit gradually. From 2000 to 2004, al-Giza governorate provided the town with many public buses, connecting Kerdasa with the al-Haram area as well as other surrounding towns and villages (Ibid.). During Mahjoub's term, Kerdasa was transformed from a village to a city. This meant, firstly, that the town had a larger budget, from which it was able to spend more on public amenities. Secondly, it meant that the town now had a City Centre *(Markaz*

[41] I was able to verify Mikkawi's claims through many Kerdasan townspeople.

Madina), with its own independent resources such as billboard revenues and local taxes (Hussain Omar, Interview).

How did local elites succeed in convincing the state to upgrade their town? They did this primarily through two strategies. The first strategy, as mentioned above, was to utilize contradictions among the SLA and manoeuvre between power centres in the Egyptian bureaucracy. This was the main strategy that local elites employed to advance their local developmental agenda. To do so, they found it necessary to join the NDP, as it was the sole formal public sphere through which they could operate. The second, less utilized, strategy was to entice the state to establish local institutions by contributing to them from local community resources. Donations from politicians, entrepreneurs and local people in general were collected at different times as contributions, in order to convince the government that the town deserved better public institutions. Thus, local elites systematically accrued local institutions over time to the extent that this gave the state no option but to upgrade the village to a city. In this sense, they forced the state to take the local elite seriously.[42]

Hence, the transformation of Kerdasa from a village to a city could not be completed without the local NDP and the efforts of its leadership to pressure the state and its bureaucracy to bring this about in the context of the competition over the political field. Local personalities used the available tools and frameworks to negotiate with the state and to obtain its recognition that they deserved to become acknowledged as urbanized. From my research on

[42] Almost all the local NDP leaders interviewed by me have stressed the importance of local donations in convincing the local unit or Giza Governorate to support their efforts to provide Kerdasa with more services (electricity, street paving, etc.) and facilities (youth clubs, school complexes, a vehicle-licensing agency, etc.).

Kerdasa, it became obvious that local figures worked hard on numerous developmental initiatives at many levels and in a number of fields, such as education, sports, services, transportation, and infrastructure, and that many of these initiatives evolved to become a kind of effective local policy, which stressed local involvement in such services. Therefore, what began as an initiative in the 1980s had become a right in the Mubarak era, whereby local agents raised themselves up as representatives of the local community that could not be overlooked. Eventually, these 'manoeuvring' elites were effective in pushing the state to agree to 'upgrade' their town to the next level of urbanization: a city.

Conclusion: Localizing the Bifurcated State

This chapter has argued that neighbourhoodism has been the dominant habitus through which socio-political mobilizations in the Cairo peri-urban frontier could be realized. From the 1980s, local people intensively developed a socio-cultural relation with their social spaces, which redefined the sources of political legitimacy and contributed to the establishment of local politics as a political field. While before then the subject of politics had revolved around domestic social peace, in the Mubarak era objectifying and politicizing the social space has pervaded local politics after. On account of this development, local elites in the region developed a public terminology and strategies of social mobilization that stressed the pivotal role of the town in politics and ethics. While neighborhoods and urban quarters inside Cairo had witnessed neighbourhoodism earlier, as can be inferred from Sawsan el-Messiri's work (Messiri, 1978), the towns in Greater Cairo's peri-urban fringe had to wait until the 1980s for its advent, following the decline of urban-rural immigration, the emergence of towns' self-sufficient markets and the development of the transportation network. All these factors helped local people to imagine remaining located in their

hometowns far into the foreseeable future. This inspired local communities to behave politically as local communities. Hence, 'community politics' was rationalized.

This chapter has also argued that from the early 1980s, both the NDP and the SLA in Cairo's peri-urban fringe have represented a rising segment of political social agents who came to localize the bifurcated state. This development has revolutionized local politics and made it more competitive. Nevertheless, despite the fact that both the NDP and the SLA were an expression of this field's emergence, their encroachment also contributed to a consolidation of the political field itself. It was a dialectical relationship. Nevertheless, as will be considered in detail in Chapter 4, local politics in the early 1980s was still only nascent. It was characterized by a limited competition. This competition was driven by the rise of the first wave of lesser notables, the *infitah* beneficiaries, and the remaining ASU veterans who could comfortably maintain their positions in the political field. This situation, however, would not last for long, in particular on account of the new wave of lesser notables that arose in the late 1980s, who began to develop new strategies to defend and improve their positions inside the political field.

Hence, the NDP, at least in Cairo's outskirts, was a reflection of this development. The ruling party, as this analysis has contended, was an institutional umbrella under which the Egyptian state coopted the rising segment of lesser notables who reflected a new relationship with their localities, and who played roles that had never been played before. Observers have tended to claim that the NDP was the party of the state. It was therefore a party with no ideology. While my analysis would agree with the first statement, it must express considerable reservations with regard to the second. This chapter has shown that it was localization, in fact, that was the ideology of the NDP. The NDP was the party of locals.

This was its strength and weakness at the same time. While the party was rooted locally in almost every town in Cairo's peri-urban fringe, it failed to translate its local strength to the national level. In fact, it is more accurate to understand the NDP as an aggregation of localized parties in Egypt, rather than as one unified national party. The local NDP figures were successful and well known in their localities, but they were barely known in the neighboring towns and villages. The NDP was considered an essential means to acquire spatial representation in politics, which became central to Egyptian socio-political mobility in the Mubarak era. Many lesser notables in Cairo's peri-urban frontier used the ruling party to express this tendency. Few of them were aware of party politics at the upper levels or engaged in conflicts when Gamal Mubarak appeared on the Egyptian political scene.

This is what rendered the NDP impotent in its competition with the MB in Cairo's peri-urban fringe. The former was indeed deeply rooted in local communities in general, and especially among the clans (*a'ailat*). Therefore, it found little difficulty in winning the competition for local councils. However, because it was socially constructed to resemble a local municipal council, the NDP struggled to forge a large-scale campaign, to convince people who belonged to several towns and villages. In a large-scale region that consisted of many local communities, neighbourhoodism did not work; here, it was the politics of identity that flourished. This is why the MB, by contrast, were able to defeat the NDP, in a region where most local communities were historically attached to the latter.

As will be shown in the following chapter, the MB in Cairo's peri-urban fringe in the 1990s was the opposite of the NDP. With few exceptions, MB local figures were not important at the local level, were barely known and had no chance to compete with any of their NDP counterparts, who were more locally rooted and established. Nevertheless, when it came to

general elections, the MB's candidates easily overpowered the NDP candidates, because the former were able to produce a discourse that evoked public sympathy and religious commitment.

Our analysis of the NDP in Kerdasa has not yet been completed. We will later return to address the question of how neighbourhoodism, from the late 1980s, could continue to produce new kinds of strategies and capitals that were used by NDP men to compete for positions in the political field, or to gain recognition. As will be shown in Chapter 4, clannism was the main strategy that local agents employed to safeguard their positions in the political field. However, prior to this, it is necessary first to examine the socio-political mobilizations in Cairo's peri-urban fringe that took a religious form, and which were also influenced by neighbourhoodism, as the next chapter will show.

3

RELIGIOUS NEIGHBOURHOODISM:

THE MOSQUE MOVEMENT AND THE NDP IN CAIRO'S PERI-URBAN FRINGE

The previous chapter showed the way in which the NDP functioned socio-politically in Cairo's peri-urban fringe. By examining the case of Kerdasa, we saw that the ruling party in the Mubarak era played a vital role not only in bridging local communities and the state, but also in localizing the state's local institutions. It was also argued that from the 1980s, the NDP in this region politically reflected the rise of a dominant habitus that shaped and influenced collective political practices. We called it neighbourhoodism – a cognitive structure that have made social spaces the subject of socio-political mobilization. Hence, the process of urbanization in this region changed the foundation of politics and produced new forms of mobilization on the local level.

The previous chapter also suggested that the Egyptian local state, and other local political and administrative apparatuses and proxies (for example, the NDP and the SLA), can be viewed as rationalization of neighbourhoodism. Hence, these institutions were perceived by many lesser notables as the sole *formal* public sphere in through which they improved their positions in the political field. This chapter will argue that neighbourhoodism was also vital in the development of the mobilization of Political Islam. In Kerdasa, as will be shown, Islamists competed both among themselves and with the local NDP in the representation of

the social space. In most literature on Political Islam, the Islamic movement is conceived as a societal organization that has stressed a politics of identity. Nevertheless, I will contend that the Islamic movement also owed its revival and motivations in the 1970s and the 1980s, at least in Cairo's peri-urban frontier, to neighbourhoodism.

This chapter will follow the story of the Islamic movement in Kerdasa. Firstly, it will attempt to shed light on the locally famous incidents of 1965 in Kerdasa. That year was unforgettable for most Kerdasians, including later generations, who have grown up hearing from older relatives and community members how Nasser's security forces made a 'disaster' in the town in 1965, and arrested the majority of its residents, after a few villagers had protected a house in Kerdasa from undercover security intelligence agents, believing that they were thieves. This story was evoked repeatedly beginning in the latter part of the twentieth century, contributing to stressing localism. Secondly, this analysis will address the revival of the Islamic movement in Cairo's outskirts in the 1970s and 1980s, revealing that the mosque movement might not have been revived in Kerdasa without the protection offered by the first generation of the local NDP (the ASU veterans). Community politics allowed both groups to cooperate for almost a decade. As would be elaborated by the leaders, the mosque movement, which was incubating a new generation of the MB leaders and jihadi sheikhs, could work together with the ASU veterans because they shared a common social medium. The third section will analyze the mosque movement in Kerdasa in the 1980s and 1990s from the same perspective. It will be argued that even sheikhs' disputes over mosques can also be viewed as a struggle over the representation of religious social spaces. The tense relationship between jihadists and the state in Cairo's peri urban fringe in the 1990s can be seen as the result of the jihadi direction's urge to expand their influence beyond religious

social spaces and to challenge authoritarian control over the political field and impose themselves on it. Overall, this chapter offers an attempt to understand the interaction between the micro and the macro; how socio-cultural mobility on the local level fed broader currents on a larger scale.

3.1 From Locals to the Local

In 1965, the Egyptian regime carried out a huge crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood. The aim was to uproot the organization and to eradicate its influence, which was concentrated in Cairo's suburbs. It has been claimed that more than 15,000-20,000 Brotherhood members were arrested. Organization sources also claimed that thousands of them were killed and executed in prisons. Many sources aside from the Brotherhood's own (potentially self-interested) literature confirm that the military campaign was brutal (Habib, 1997, pp. 253–313; Sadat, 1978, p. 215).[43]

In the early part of his tenure, President Sadat criticized Nasser's security apparatuses' repression of their opponents (Sadat, 1978, pp. 288–289). He released thousands of MB members in the early 1970s and allowed them to work on the ground, though informally. This was an attempt to use their influence (especially at the 'grassroots' level) to work against the leftist wing of the Egyptian coalition government and to support his radical policy changes to the economy, which required a shifting of alliance from the USSR to the USA (Farah, 2009, p. 113). Sadat won the battle against 'power centres' (*marakiz al-quwa*) in the

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[43] Tariq Habib's book offered various testimonies from different directions (including Nasserists). President Sadat himself said in his book that the MB members in 1965 were subjected to "torture, humiliation and human right abuse".

state. He radically changed Egypt's foreign orientation. However, he also opened the way for Islamization. In 1981, he paid for this with his life (Milton-Edwards, 2013, p. 66).

Muslim Brotherhood literature over decades has constructed a collective sense of victimhood that became the pillar of an ikhwani identity. The "adversity narrative" or *mihna,* according to Khalil al-Anani, is rooted in the organization's memory and its socialization process. Nasser's attempts to eradicate the Brotherhood "left a significant physiological impact on the movement's leaders, who repeatedly invoke these images in order to create solidarity among members and ensure the movement's unity" (Al-Anani, 2016, pp. 141–142). Such stories and images, al-Anani states, established a shared history that fostered the accommodation of repression and the avoidance of internal schisms (Ibid.).

The so-called "disaster of Kerdasa" in 1965 was indeed one of these stories. The person who documented it and made it a part of *mihna* narrative was Gaber Rizq. Rizq was a member of the 'Special Apparatus' (*al-Tanzim al-Khass*), an informal vanguard faction in the MB that was co-founded by Sayid Qotb.[44] Rizq narrated the incident as a story in a book entitled "The Massacres of *al-Ikhwan* in Nasser's Prisons", which includes many other horrifying stories and testimonies about the persecution of MB members in 1965. These stories were

[44] For further details about the 1965 *Tanzim* from one of its members, see: (Abdel-Majid, 1991).

Omar Ashour pointed out that 1965 *Tanzim* was an output of an attempt by Zaynab al-Ghazali (the head of the Muslim Sisters Society in the 1950s) and Abdul Fattah Ismael (a member in the Special Apparatus that had been established in Banna's time) to unify several MB affiliated groups, most of whom were members in the former Special Apparatus grassroots who had not been arrested in 1954. However, this unified group lacked a spiritual legitimacy from the MB leadership until they contacted Sayed Qutb (who was newly released from prison) who endorsed the organization. (Ashour, 2009, pp. 74–77).

repeatedly circulated among Brotherhood members from the late 1970s, after Sadat relaxed the regime's tight grip on the MB. The flourishing of such stories considerably shaped the way the Brotherhood viewed the Egyptian state and themselves.

In 1976, Rizq felt safe enough to collect all his stories and to publish them in a book, which was reprinted numerous times and read by a new generation of brothers whose youth leadership contributed to the revival of the Brotherhood in universities (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 73). Hence, the generation of the 1980s, and the new intermediate leadership after Sadat, did not learn *ikhwani* thought from Hasan Banna's writings, speeches and practices in the 'liberal age' of the 1940s. They knew it from the memorialization of Nasser's persecution of the Brotherhood youth of the 1960s.[45] This narrative marginalized Banna's rich experience as well as his political model. The persecution narrative dwarfed his image until it became, for many, that of a martyr killed by an anti-Islamic regime (*hukm jahili`*— lit. 'rule of the age of ignorance'). In the 1980s, therefore, many Brotherhood members

[45] In his memoirs, Abdel Moneim abou-el Fotouh indicated that in the first half of the 1970s there were two groups inside the MB. The first group was influenced by *al-Tanzim al-Khass* and by the Nasserite repression of the Brotherhood from 1954. This group included Gaber Rizq, the person who narrated the story of Kerdasa. The second group, according to Abou-el Fotouh, was more influenced by Hasan Banna's approach, which was non-violent. (Tammām, 2012, p. 95). Abou-el Fotouh said that his generation knew the MB from the first group and they got to know the second group, which was seen as relatively loose and pragmatic, quite late. (Ibid. p.95).

evoked the death of Banna (assassinated in 1949) as the beginning of the *mihna*, even though the first wave of Nasser's repression against the MB began in 1954.[46]

The story of the "disaster of Kerdasa" begins in 1965 with plainclothes agents from military intelligence making a clandestine raid on the home of a Brotherhood member named Sayyid Nizili, and ends with the besieging and punishing of most Kerdasians, including the *umda* (Rizq, 1986). The narrator and preserver of the story, Rizq, begins the narrative in his book by introducing himself as "one of the people of Kerdasa, a young member of the MB in the 1950s, and a member of the 1965 *Tanzim* [= *al-Tanzim al-Khass*]."(Ibid.). In order to document the incident, he tells us, he collected testimonies from the townspeople who witnessed the event or were among its victims (Ibid.).

Rizq continues by stating that around sunset on 21 August 1965, eight burly men stormed the house of Sayyid Nizili who, along with others of the town's youth, was sought by the military police for being part of the *Tanzim* that had been uncovered in August 1965. That wave of arrests of MB figures had begun at the end of July 1965, prior to the uncovering of any Brotherhood paramilitary group. Since the military police failed to find Nizili, they took his brother and his new bride as hostages. Neither the two prisoners nor the townspeople knew the identities of these eight captors, whom they thought were thieves. The townspeople tried to rescue them and clashed with the men by throwing stones. Later, the local chief of police (*al-ma'mur*) was able to identify one of the men from his military police ID card after

[46] Later, the third General Guide Umar al-Tilmisani in the 1980s evoked al-Banna's experience in politics to legitimate the Brotherhood new relationship with the Mubarak regime and its relations with the other leftist and liberal parties.

he had lost consciousness. He shouted out, “You’re done for, Kerdasa! This is a disaster, people of Kerdasa! These men are not thieves but the military police!” (Ibid.).

Over the next three days in Kerdasa, the security forces retaliated heavily in an operation that was personally attended—according to Gaber Rizq—by the then-Interior Minister, Abdel Azim Fahmi, the Head of the Army Operations Room, General Ali Gamal al-Din, the Minister of War, Shams Badran, the governor and security director of al-Giza Governorate, and the area police chief. The town was besieged on all sides by tanks, armoured vehicles, and cars lining the streets, in addition to an imposed curfew. The security forces searched every house in the town, smashing everything possible. According to Rizq, they stole all they could get their hands on, and ruined the interiors of people’s homes (Ibid.).

Operations began to arrest the town’s *umda* and most of his extended family (Mikkawis), the local *sheikhs*, the watchmen and their chief. They were all, Rizq claimed, roped together and “driven along like cattle”. He states: “Half-naked women in their night clothes were wailing, while children screamed, and the men were in utter confusion.” (Ibid.). All the prisoners were led to the preparatory school which, being in the centre of town, the military police had taken over as their headquarters and turned into a terrifying torture camp. After this chilling display, the detainees were driven away from Kerdasa in armoured vehicles to military prison, where “a horrific massacre of Egypt’s finest youth and men was perpetrated. A massacre unlike any that had happened in Egypt’s history, except for the Roman period when the Christians were being persecuted.” (Ibid.). Kerdasa experienced around three months of terror. The mosques were closed, the call to prayer was banned, and prayers inside the mosque stopped. Every street and alley (*hara*) was guarded until “food and water ran

out. The cattle starved and died of thirst. Mothers' milk dried up in their breasts and babies died."[47]

The exaggerations in the account given by Rizq are plain to see. Elements such as the death of breastfed babies because a mother's milk had dried up, and the leading figures in the regime who themselves took an interest in inspecting the town, reflect the narrator's attempts to build up a *mihna* narrative.[48] This was a discourse that was less concerned with writing history than with mobilizing the ikhwani grassroots in order to build up the organization again. However, one can be certain that a brutal military campaign took place in Kerdasa that affected most of its residents. As I was told by different persons who were young then, or heard from their parents, at least one officer was killed by Kerdasians (Ashraf Rajab, Interview).[49] The central government in Cairo was informed that what was happening in Kerdasa was part of a coup that had been planned by the Brotherhood. It took them weeks to realize that it was a local incident; the MB had nothing to do with it (Ibid.).

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[47] Ibid. Further details about the story can be found in Part One of his work, which was published in 1976; Riqz delayed publication of Part Two until 1986, when he stated in explanation: "I was unable to publish Part Two until ten years had passed because two of the main butchers remained at the head of the worst security apparatus during this black era of Nasserite dictatorship".

[48] Ahmad Nizili, son of Sayyid Nizili, interviewed by telephone; he confirmed the event. He did not, however, rule out exaggeration in the account, acknowledging that Gaber Rizq was originally a writer of short stories. (Nizili, Ahmed. Interview).

[49] Stories narrated by the MB's sources did not mention that one of the officers was killed. Casualties among the Military Police might suggest that the security apparatuses thought that the Kerdasa incident was a part of an *al-Tanzim* conspiracy. Different interviews conducted in May and June 2016.

This is the story as contained in ikhwani sources – how did Kerdasa's people tell it? The testimonies of many individuals from Kerdasa confirmed that that a military campaign took place there, including the besieging of the town and humiliation of its people. The local memory, apparently, adopted elements from the ikhwani story but also stressed the role that was played by the town's elite to contain the crisis. While the 'disaster of Kerdasa' appeared in Brotherhood accounts as an example of the brutality and "barbarianism" of the Nasser regime, in the local account it was a misunderstanding and overestimation. The local story also recounted efforts led by local personalities at the time, who had relations with the central government, to clear up the confusion (Ibid.).

Nevertheless, Kerdasa's local memory is not homogeneous and unified. In fact, it often seems contradictory. Although many emphasized the role that local figures played in the crisis to settle the dispute, many also claimed that the state inflicted an ongoing collective punishment on the town, at least until the January 25 Revolution. It was said that the regime deliberately marginalized Kerdasa, excluding its residents from employment and services. People from Kerdasa, including figures from the local NDP, claimed that Kerdasians were forbidden to join both the army and the police. However, it is difficult to verify these claims since many personalities from the town also became prominent figures in state institutions such as the parliament (Mahmoud Fahmi Mikkawi) and jurisdiction. Furthermore, many Kerdasians claimed that President Sadat himself visited Kerdasa sometime in the early 1970s. Sadat's ex-wife, Iqbal Madi, was from the Mikkawi family, but she and Sadat divorced in the late 1940s. Hence, the local narrative of the relation between Kerdasa and the state was vague and contradictory.

Whether Kerdasa was really subjected to discrimination by the state or not, many of its residents were convinced that they had been a subject of the state's collective punishment during the Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak eras (Various Interviews). This story assisted the MB in constructing a *mihna* discourse and the local community used it later to subliminally stress political localism. In Kerdasa, therefore, the two narratives, the local one and the 'Islamic' one, served two different kinds of mobilization. The MB claimed that the campaign was evidence of the organization's influence on Egyptian society. On the other hand, the local community saw the August 1965 incidents as the beginning of a tense relationship between the state and the town, to the extent that the local NDP leaders themselves were convinced that their hometown had been a victim of state policies (Mohammad Abu Mousa, Interview).

Both perceptions were exaggerated. Quality of services and infrastructure in Kerdasa has been much better compared to other cities and villages in the surrounding area. The previous chapter also demonstrated that the town's elite was often able to convince decision makers in the governorate or the central government to allocate resources for town development. On the other hand, my work on Kerdasa indicates that the town did not witness a significant presence of the MB prior to 1965. This is understandable since the MB was an urban movement and had to wait until the late 1970s to encompass new sections from rural backgrounds, who would join it as first-generation university students. In fact, one can imagine that Sayid Nizili, whom the military police had raided the town to arrest, chose Kerdasa to hide because it was uncommon then to find MB members (or political activists in general) in rural Egypt (or in the villages around Cairo). In the MB's sources, it is rare to

find references to the names of villages that were under the organization's influence.[50] This might be one of the reasons that MB literature highlights the case of Kerdasa. It was taken as evidence that the organization could make inroads in the countryside. Of course, it was not able to do so. The people of Kerdasa had barely heard of the MB prior to the 1970s (Various Interviews).

Hence, two different histories have emerged from the authoritarian practices of 1965. The first is the history of MB victimhood, the *mihna* narrative, as discussed above. The second is the history of a 'local community' that people refer to as 'Kerdasa'. This section argues that the 1970s was a crucial period that witnessed the birth of the 'local community' idea in the Cairo outskirts. Before then, locals were not involved in objectifying their localities.

As it was mentioned in Chapter 1, the Egyptian state, from the late of nineteenth century at least, has been characterized by highly centralized nature (Ayubi, 1980, pp. 497–498) that consolidated its ability to prevent the constitution of most forms of communal groups (Baer, 1964, pp. 165–166, 1969, pp. 40–41; Awad, 2018). Through modern Egyptian history, the central authority was able to violently crash *fellahin* riots without the need to make compromises (Brown, 1990; Fahmy, 1997). When 'the public' was gradually politicized in 'the age of republics'[51], this has had a distinctive output. In Cairo's peri-urban fringe, a

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[50] An online archive for the MB literature such as books, memoirs and testimonies is available on their database on web. See: https://goo.gl/87rme8

[51] In his book on sectarianism (*al-ta'ifiya*), Azmi Bishara elaborates that elites in Arab pre-modern states had never concerned themselves with "politicizing the public". The politicization of the public started gradually from the era of republics. (Bishara, 2018, pp. 44–45)

consequence of this has been pushing social agents to organize themselves on spatial bases. Hence, unlike other rural societies in the Middle East, such as the Arab Mashreq where sectarianism and tribalism could be activated as a response to modernity generally and state-building particularly (Bishara, 2015), Egyptian local communities were too weak and fragmented to do likewise. Instead, they began to produce a politics of space as one of the few means by which they could manoeuvre the state (Awad, 2018).

3.2 The NDP and the Mosque Movement in Cairo's Peri-urban Fringe

The previous section reflected on a relatively early period when locals increasingly stressed their localism, which this study explains by the emergence of neighbourhoodism. Due to historical conditions, the confrontation between locals in Cairo's rural hinterlands and the state led to the birth of the idea of local communities that were self-conscious of themselves. This section will show how this development might have facilitated the production of a new politics of identity in the region, leading to the revival of the MB after the Nasser regime had almost eradicated it. As the following pages will demonstrate, it was early local NDP leaders (the ASU veterans) who provided protection to the early Islamists in Kerdasa, though probably without awareness of their potential political influence. Moreover, they offered a kind of public sphere in which the first Brotherhood members were able to practise their activities. However, it is important to stress that Kerdasian Islamists in the early Sadat period were also motivated by neighbourhoodism. This naturally entailed objectifying their social space, a practice perceived by the ASU leaders as an organic development of community politics.

It is widely agreed that the Egyptian regime was relatively successful in uprooting the MB by the end of the Nasser era. The old structure of the organization, which had been urban-based, had atrophied by this time. When Sadat released the organization's leaders, they found themselves alone with almost no grassroots support. The northern branch of *al-gama'a al-islamiyya*[52] decided to 'pledge' itself to the MB leadership in the late 1970s, giving the organization a new impetus, which led to a revival of the MB. One such member of *al-gama'a al-islamiyya*, Abdel Moneim Abou-el Fotouh, later to become a prominent political Islamic figure in Egypt, was the Student Body President of al-Qasr al-Aini College, which embraced a vigorous Islamic activism that was encouraged by Sadat's divide and rule policy. In his memoirs, Abou-el Fotouh recalled how he discovered the prohibited organization. When he attended the College, he had a vague image of the MB that was distorted by the Nasser regime propaganda (Tammām, 2012, p. 23). According to him, Sadat's policies of enabling freedom of speech gave a new generation of devout youths in universities a historical opportunity to reconnect with the Islamic movement as it then existed. The MB at this time represented its historical legacy and *al-Gama'a al-Islamiya* represented the grassroots (Ibid., pp.79-81).

[52] *Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya* was a puritanical Islamic student movement in the Egyptian universities that was formed spontaneously in the early 1970s, taking advantage of Sadat political semi-liberalization. The movement in that time had no clear political vision although it was, as one of its founders Egypt Abdel Moneim abou-el Fotouh stated, a response to the leftist cultural activism on university campuses. In the late 1970s, most of *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya* leaders decided to join the MB unconditionally. A few groups in Upper Egypt abstained and formed new militias that confronted the state. (Tammām, 2012)

Many of Abou-el Fotouh's peers and contemporaries in the 1970s and 1980s shared elements of his experience. Abdel Salam Bashandi, who was one of the prominent local leaders of the MB in Kerdasa, and their candidate for the parliamentary election for the district in the 2000s, also said that he only learned properly about the MB when his father was released from political imprisonment in 1971 (Abdel-Salam Bashandi, Interview). Prior to then, Bashandi's awareness of the MB had been distorted by Nasserite propaganda. From the early 1970s, ikhwani political prisoners were gradually released. Therefore, many of Bashandi's peers started to contact the Brothers. Ikhwani doctrines such as Banna's teachings (*rasael Hasan al-Banna*) were circulated among a new generation, and were amplified by a deep social, cultural and ideological wave that hit the region (Ibid.). The decline of Arab nationalism after the Arab defeat by Israel in 1967 left an ideological vacuum that was filled by a new supra-state revisionist Islamic or Islamist ideology. The negative side effects of state-building – the corruption and inequality exacerbated by oil remittances from the Arab Gulf– "turned those who felt excluded to political Islam as an ideology of protest" (Hinnebusch, 2003).

Bashandi was involved in Islamic activism before he joined the MB. He describes how he managed with his friends in the early 1970s to hold events in Kerdasa such as conferences, seminars, religious book exhibitions and holding Eid prayer in public. In these events, *ulama* and sheikhs from all over the country were invited, including those of the MB. Bashandi was also among a group of Kerdasian youth who were involved in charitable events such as organizing markets for household goods to support low-income families, as well as offering free after-school tutoring sessions (Bashandi, Ibid.). These activities, as I

was informed by many Kerdasians, were remembered by a whole generation in the town, though few beneficiaries were aware of who was behind this charity (Various Interviews).

Many researchers have tried to understand the logic behind Islamic preaching and charitable work in the last decades. These activities have been viewed as unique practices resulting from the functionalization and objectification of religion. While both processes were initiated by the state as tools of hegemony, their outcomes have been contradictory, leading to a fragmentation of the elites. Furthermore, these processes helped to reproduce political Islam and enabled Islamic movements to utilize state institutions such as mosques, schools and charitable organizations in order to overcome the official ban on their formal existence by making these places arenas of participation (Starrett, 1998).

Saba Mahmood, however, in her ethnographic work on what she calls "Mosque Movements", has stressed that the resurgence of a politics of piety and Islamic forms of feminist sociability was not a form of social protest against the failed modernizing project of post-colonial Muslim regimes. Nor was it fueled by an objectification of religion. These forms should be understood, she claims, through an exploration of their ethical practices (Mahmood, 2011, p. 35). Their goal is to introduce a "common set of shared norms of standards by which one is to judge one's own conduct, whether in the context of employment, education, domestic life or other social activities" (Ibid., p. 48). Hence, *da'wa* practices were mainly internal and self-constructing.

Marie Vannetzel has argued that charitable practices in Egypt was not restricted to Political Islam, but rather should be understood as an aspect of Egypt's liberal and neo-liberal turn. Although the Egyptian state from the 1970s implemented structural adjustment policies, it

could not abandon its role as a “main provider in the economy drawing its own revenues from external rents, which were used to subsidize constituencies among business elites and other social groups” (Vannetzel, 2017, p. 223). Nasser’s model of the state as an architect of development redefined the notion of politics in a way that could not be ignored by successive governments. This has made the myth of state developmentalism vivid, in spite of the neo-liberal turn induced by twenty years of the International Monetary Fund-sponsored Structural Adjustment Programs (Ibid., p. 224).

This contradiction, according to Vannetzel, has been blurred by changing the definition of politics, which has been dissolved into the idea of public ‘services’ (*khidma pl. khadamat*). This has altered the definition of “the good representative -a member either of parliament or of the local council - into ‘the one who serves people’ (*elli beyekhdem al-nas*)”, an idea that has been strongly “anchored in the political imaginary” (Ibid., p. 225). Subsequently, members of parliament, members of local councils, and NDP local leaders have been expected to deliver services that will benefit local communities, such as building schools or dispensaries, mosques, and having areas connected to the electricity supply or sewage system, thereby relying on the public expenditure.

Over time, nevertheless, the state’s financial resources could not bear these costs, and NDP elites were increasingly urged to find other sources that could be redistributed (Ibid.). This explains why various local structures were involved in “public work” (*al-‘amal al-‘amm*), which included state-sponsored organizations, youth centres, social clubs, solidarity cooperatives in the workplace (*gam‘iyyat ta‘awuniyya*), and labour unions. The term also includes societal organizations such as voluntary charitable associations (*gam‘iyyat*

khayriyya), popular reconciliation assemblies (*majalis al-sulh*), and mosque-linked *zakat* committees (Ibid.).

In this context, local politics has become central in the socio-political mobilization and "politics of goodness" that has thrived as the main expression of this process. For this reason, charitable and *da'wa* acts in Egypt have flourished. As Vannetzel points out, the "politics of goodness" has had three defining features:

> It was, first, a relocation of the state developmentalist myth into the micro-level of the spirit of services, placed on the shoulders of local elites. Second, it was a configuration made of overlapping networks of public work and charities, in which political identities were often blurred. Lastly, it was a conflictual consensus in which political antagonisms were understated. (Ibid., p. 236)

In this sense, it was true that both the MB and NDP elites were competing to win the representation of local communities, to the extent that the Mubarak regime systematically targeted any of the Islamic organization's activities that might threaten the regime's domination, but tolerated other activities and 'goodness' networks when the NDP elites failed to offer alternatives. Thus, although both the NDP and the MB were regarded as rivals, their versions of local politics shared the samelogic. The limits of local politics were predetermined by representations of state developmentalism.

Mahmood's assessment is very useful in understanding "the politics of pity" on the macro-level, while Vannetzel's assessment is necessary to view "politics of goodness" from above. However, both assessments missed identifying the social medium where the micro and macro interact. This social medium was responsible for localizing the macro and producing different forms of political mobilization on the ground that involved objectifying social spaces, and in a later stage, politicizing it. But before applying my analysis on the case of

Kerdasa, it is worth analyzing how the rise of the neo-localism might be echoed in the formal discourse.

There were probably very few Egyptians who knew the village where Nasser's parents lived in Upper Egypt. People knew that he was of rural origins, but the specific name of the village or its exact location was not important. Nasser himself never mentioned his home-village in his speeches. By contrast, many Egyptians know Mit Abu El Kom, the birthplace of Anwar al-Sadat, which was frequently mentioned in his speeches. It may be argued that invoking the village's name was consistent with the regime discourse, with what Sadat called 'village morals' *(qeyam al-qaria)* (Sadat, 1978, p. 113).

This discourse has been considered an expression of deep transformations that Egyptian society underwent, such as the ruralization of the middle class as a result of Nasser's version of developmentalism (Binder, 1978; Aidi, 2008, pp. 175–176). Thus, the rural middle class was to be the new social base for the regime or at least in alliance with it (Ansari, 1986, p. 233). Moreover, this discourse reflected the search for new legitimacies in the post-1967 war era. The Egyptian political and economic turn had to be accompanied by a new moral discourse that stressed the role of the family instead of class, as well as the centrality of faith (*al-iman*) instead of emancipation. The shift has been described as a turn towards re-traditionalization; it was a new "invention of tradition" rather than a revival of traditional Islam (Tibi, 2006, p. 166).[53]

Nevertheless, my analysis also stresses the importance of what I have called neighbourhoodism and the emergence of 'the local' in Egyptian political mobilization. In

[53] Further analysis on the formal discourse towards political neo-localism is in chapter 4.

this regard, even the mosque movement and *da'wa* practices in the 1970s can be associated with the rise of neighbourhoodism and seen as a form of development of community politics. The first generation of devout youths, as Bashandi and others who witnessed this period tell us, made efforts to change the names of streets and neighborhoods in Kerdasa to Islamic names. At that time the motivation was not perceived political, and all of these activities were held under the slogan of the Muslim Youth of Kerdasa (*shabab Kerdasa al-muslim*) (Bashandi, Ibid.). It was a collective act involving the identification and objectifying of the social space. At the time, this practice was novel, but it was also perceived as part and parcel of community politics. Almost as soon as local people became used to talking on behalf of themselves as local communities in the 1970s, however, they began to objectify their villages and give them identities.

We certainly know that this kind of Islamic activism initially was not perceived by the first generation of the NDP leadership (the ASU veterans) politically. Sayed al-Zinnari, who was one of the organizers, has confirmed that the Kerdasian local NDP elite supported their initiatives by facilitating their use of the town's amenities for their charitable and religious activities. Sheikh Yousef Abdel Salam Saleh, who had been a prominent local member of the ASU in the Nasser and Sadat period, and became from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s the head of the Local Council and the General Secretary of the NDP until the late 1980s, had opened the use of Kerdasa schools, mosques, sport club as well as familial social houses (*door al-monasabat*) to them (Sayed Zinnari. Interview).

Zinnari described the relation between the local NDP leadership and the mosque movement as a cooperative and supportive one. Until the mid-1980s, those in charge of the NDP in Kerdasa, according to Zinnari, "were very good men". They viewed Islamic activists like

Bashandi and Zinnari as "devout youths whose activities were useful to the town" (Ibid.). Local figures such as Abdel Salam Saleh and Mohammad Abu Taleb, who were ASU veterans and the NDP cornerstones in Kerdasa at this time, made serious efforts to "support our activities because they represented Kerdasa not the NDP". (Ibid.) In this period, there was "a real sense of belonging to Kerdasa among everyone" (*kan fe haja ismaha* Kerdasa) (Ibid.). Nevertheless, it should be also observed that "there was a division of roles". The mosque movement was responsible for charitable work and *da'wa*, while the then local NDP leaders (the ASU veterans), who were very respected, were responsible for the town's public affairs, such as resolving local disputes. (Ibid.). At that time, as we will elaborate later, the main role the local NDP leadership assumed was to keep the domestic peace (*al-silm al-ahli*) and solve local disputes, therefore, both Abdel Salam and Abu Taleb did not see any problem in the activities of the mosque movement. On the contrary, they encouraged it.

Islamic activists never imagined that they could do what the ASU veterans did, because the former were too young. The nature of the public work for which the then NDP local figures were responsible could only be competently handled by veterans with years of experience. On the other hand, nobody expected Abdel Salam Saleh and Abu Taleb to do what the Islamic activists did, because the latter's activities were presumed to be a form of youth action – activities that were "organized by boys" (Ibid.). In short, there was an age gap that prevented any competition, and thereby any collision or confrontation. Even in parliamentary elections, Zinnari states, local people did not care about the candidates' political orientation, whether they were *ikhwan* or NDP members; they voted for the candidate who was from Kerdasa. This was the sole principle (Ibid.). A practice shows how

neighbourhoodism constructed a base that links entities “that are alien to each other together with their own specific localizations” (Löw, 2016, p. xvii).

3.2.1 The Case of Mohammad Sayed al-Ghizlani

In this context, Mohammad Sayed Ghizlani had the opportunity to become involved in ‘public work’ and to gain experience that would make him a role model in the town. Sayed Ghizlani was born in 1952. In the early 1970s, he was involved in the activities organized by the mosque movement in Kerdasa. In particular, he was known for organizing after-school sessions (*doroos takwiyya*) in Kerdasa mosques for students from low-income families. He was also active in many charitable events, especially in the holy month of Ramadan. Sayed Ghizlani graduated from al-Qasr al-Aini College as a doctor. From the late 1970s, he became known for offering free medical services for poor people, alongside his job in the Ministry of Health. In 1979, Sayed Ghizlani was the first person in his town to try to invest his experience in charitable work into politics or in Bourdieu’s terms converting his social capital to political capital. He was convinced by Sheikh Salah Abu Ismael (see later) to run on the Wafd Party list for the parliamentary elections. At that time, Wafd, the major political party of the interwar era, had been newly allowed to return to the political scene, decades after the abolition of all political parties by Nasser in 1954 (Baker, 1990, pp. 63–66).

In 1978 the leader of the Wafd, Fuad Siraj al-Din, quickly sought to make a base for the reestablished party by attracting followers who were popular in their localities, regardless of their cultural and ideological backgrounds. The Wafd was planning to challenge the Sadat regime for the loyalties of Egypt’s upper and middle classes. It was claimed that the party

succeeded in attracting “10,000 followers cutting across all social categories in a short four months, but the 1200 members included in its general assembly probably reflected its active membership” (Hinnebusch, 1984, p. 114). Al-Ghizlani was one of those followers, but he did not succeed in getting elected. He was prevented by Nazmi al-Mikkawi, the formal candidate of the NDP in Kerdasa. In the 1979 electoral campaign, members of Mikkawi family physically assaulted Sayed al-Ghizlani and prevented him from campaigning in Kerdasa (Ahmed Mohammad Ghizlani. Interview; Moa’taz Mikkawi. Interview). However, this repression was not motivated by fear of the rise of Islamists. It was too early for that. Islamists had not yet manifested the sort of threat they would in later decades. Such acts of repression as was carried out against the Wafd should be rather viewed as a reflection of Sadat’s decision to alienate the newly legalized party and thwart its reemergence, out of his fear that it would “rally all those dissatisfied with the regime for whatever reason.” (Baker, 1990, pp. 66–67; Hinnebusch, 1984, p. 114)

The Wafd party was the first political entity outside the regime’s umbrella to be aware of the rise of a new segment of middlemen in such localities as Kerdasa that would compete with members of the ruling party. In Cairo’s peri-urban fringe, those who ran on the Wafd list in 1979 were mostly religious and involved in the mosque movement. In Nahia, the neighboring town to Kerdasa, Issam al-Aryan, who became later one of the MB’s most prominent leaders, ran on the Wafd list, but he was also physically attacked by the al-Zumor family, the local arm of the regime there (Zinnari, Interview; Bashandi, Interview). Another of these Islamist-linked candidates, in the village of Hormus (near Imbaba), was Salah Abu Ismail, an Azhari sheikh who had relations with many entities in the Gulf States, thereafter becoming involved in charitable and *da‘wa* work. Abu Ismail was one of the few candidates

to win a seat in the parliament. He would later become a leading figure in the MB (though informally) and a prominent Islamic scholar, who would have a great influence on the Islamic movement, at least in Lower Egypt (Khaled Sa'd, Interview). His son, Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, would lead a new Salafi movement after the January 25 Revolution, and tried to run in the presidential elections in May 2012, though the electoral commission, under the influence of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) had him disqualified.

The failure of the mosque movement youth leadership to participate in politics within the scope of formal political entities pushed them to abandon formal politics and to restrict their activism to charities and *da'wa* on the local level, thereby investing in their personal statuses (social capital). Nevertheless, even this pattern of local activism could not have survived without protection from the then the ASU veterans who regarded themselves responsible of community politics.

Hence, until the early 1980s, charitable initiatives were regarded by the ASU veterans as complementary to their role and necessary, since these activities were in the interest of their localities. Consequently, in Kerdasa, Yousef Abdel Salam Saleh and Mohammad Abu Taleb, who were the ruling party representatives, provided cover for youths such as Sayed al-Ghizlani. For this reason, in the middle of 1980s al-Ghizlani had quit his job in the Ministry of Health in order to establish, with the support of his brother, a clinic that had a dual purpose. On the one hand, it was a business project from which he could earn his living, taking advantage of the deteriorating conditions of the public clinic in Kerdasa. Simultaneously, it was a charitable institution through which he was able to provide many low-income patients with proper treatment. Through his behavior as a 'good doctor', al-

Ghizlani became a much-respected notable in his town, which would later be translated into political capital as will be discussed in the next chapters.

There was another reason why the NDP elite was able to embrace the emergence of Islamic-oriented local personalities such as Sayed al-Ghizlani. In that time, to be an 'Islamic' was not to be considered 'politically Islamic', as the politics of identity was still nascent. In other words, having an Islamic orientation was not taken to mean support for the MB. In fact, the MB at that time lacked any method for contacting those young devout men who had emerged from *da'wa* networks. Other Islamic groups, such as the Jihad Organization or *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya*, were minor and secretive in character, and therefore had no interest in establishing social bases. In short, those involved in the mosque movement had no established connections with any existent Islamic organization in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Sayed al-Zinnari and Abdel Salam Bashandi articulated this point. They recalled that they did not have the opportunity to get to know Kerdasa's "old local leaders" of the MB, such as Gaber Rizq and Sayed Nizili, until the middle of the 1980s. When they finally met, it was not in Kerdasa (Zinnari, Interview; Bashandi, Interview). As stated by al-Zinnari:

> When we reached puberty in Kerdasa, we did not find Sayed Nizili and Gaber Rizq or any other *ikhwani*. We heard about them, but we never met them. Actually, they did not know that we existed because they were not based in the town, but rather in the City of Cairo. Gaber Rizq had an office in el-Tawfikiyya. We started to visit him to receive blessings from him (*nakhod el-baraka*). In other words, we went to *al-ikhwan*, they did not come to us. (Zinnari, Interview)

Thus, the absence of any connection with the MB, or any other Islamic organization, made the NDP local elites in Cairo's peri-urban fringe determined to provide the Islamic

movement with protection from the regime's security apparatuses. In the second half the 1980s, all interviewees who later became *ikhwani* figures in Kerdasa stated that the NDP local figures intervened to prevent their arrest by the security forces. For example, Sayed al-Ghizlani's son, Mohammad, stated that on the eve of the 1985 parliamentary elections, Yousef Abdel Salam Saleh intervened to release his father from detention (Ahmed Mohammad Ghizlani, Interview). Due to this kind of protection, which was driven by neighbourhoodism, the mosque movement in the 1980s was able to accumulate knowledge about the needs of the local community. Moreover, their work served a new model for local politics, which would become a serious challenge to the next generation of the NDP, as the following section will show.

3.3 The Second Generation of the NDP and the Mosque Movement

By the late 1980s, the first generation of the NDP in the Cairo outskirts (who were the same generation that took charge of the ASU) had started to fade out. Nazmi Mikkawi, who was the last *umda* of Kerdasa, retired at this time and his close family lost any interest in politics.[54] Yousef Abdel Salam Saleh was defeated in the local elections by Mohammad Abdel Wahhab Mahjoub, a young NDP member who realized the new rules of the game. Mahjoub understood that local politics had become more central to the state's developmental vision than it had been in the time of his predecessors. He cultivated connections with the head of the Local Council of Ausim, the Governorate of al-Giza and the leadership of the

[54] Mikkawis attitudes towards politics will be discussed in the next chapter.

ruling party on the district level.[55] Abdel Salam Saleh, who represented the ASU veterans in Kerdasa, found himself excluded and in the early 1990s died in a car accident.[56]

The previous chapter showed how a new generation of the local NDP leadership the local NDP took charge of General Secretaries (local GSs). Consequently, those who reported to the middle leadership of the NDP on the district level, gained influence and power, and sought opportunities to run in general elections. This section will focus on their relationship with the Islamists who emerged from the mosque movement, which had been active in the 1970s and 1980s. The late 1980s in Cairo's peri-urban frontier witnessed an intense competition among empowered lesser notables. The "politics of goodness," which was introduced to local communities by independent devout youths, as we saw in the previous section, became the fundamental practice for all local elites. On the micro level, the 'division of roles' principle, which had been implied previously between the ASU veterans on the one hand, and the mosque movement youth leadership on the other, was over. With the emergence of the second generation of the local NDP men (Abdel Wahhab Mahjoub, Mahmood al-Mikkawi, Moustafa al-Gabiri *et al.*), the 'age gap' became irrelevant and the competition over the representation of the social space in Kerdasa intensified.

On the macro level, nevertheless, new developments were taking place in the same period. From the early 1980s to 1987, the MB enjoyed relative toleration by the Mubarak regime. Although the organization was denied legal recognition, it was not subjected to repressive

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[55] For more details regarding Mahjoub's role in local politics in Kerdasa, see the previous chapter.

[56] Chapter 4 will discuss the struggle between two generations of the local NDP (the ASU veterans and the NDP veterans in detail).

measures by the state, and so had greater leeway to agitate. The MB was allowed to pursue its activities, though with certain restrictions, and permitted to move back into its downtown headquarters (Ranko, 2015, p. 81). Furthermore, its alliances with the Wafd in the parliamentary elections, especially in 1984, gave the Islamic organization a chance to re-emerge in the media and to reconnect with its potential grassroots, which mainly consisted of educated youths in universities, city suburbs and the arena of civil society. In this period, Mubarak did not see the return of *ikhwan* as a threat to the regime. In fact, it was assumed firstly that their limited participation in the parliament and professional syndicates would curtail their underground expansion, making their movement visible and absorbed into the regime's proxies. Secondly, it would help to weaken the other secular opposition parties (Shehata, 2009, p. 121).

However, from 1987 onwards Mubarak's regime became alarmed by the MB's electoral successes. Their growing presence was also paralleled by a shift in attitude, as "the group moved from portraying itself to be a potential *counselor* to the state to now decidedly step up as *political opposition*." (Ranko, 2015, p. 109). This shift provoked the state to "disseminate a tarnishing image of the Brotherhood in the media. This image was based on the narrative of the Brothers as "the enemy of the nation" and it was to have a considerable impact on the group's ideology" (Ibid.). The MB challenged Mubarak by running in the 1987 elections in alliance with the Socialist Labour Party (SLP). They achieved their highest representation in parliament (thirty seats), increasing the representation of the SLP from twenty-seven to fifty-seven seats (Fahmy, 2012, p. 84). Ever since, the regime has subsequently mobilized its proxies to confront Islamists.

In Cairo's peri-urban fringe, many of the personnel who emerged from the mosque movement and its *da'wa* networks started to be perceived as ikhwan grassroots. During the period of the regime's tolerance of the MB, they were able to discover the older generations of the Brotherhood and to become members of the organization. In Kerdasa, a new generation of cross-sectional Islamic local leaders (Tareq Zaki Mikkawi, Abdel Salam Bashandi, Sayed Zinnari *et al.*) became representatives of the MB in the town. These Brotherhood members extended and intensified their charitable activities, which unlike the previous period were recognized by NDP leaders and state agencies as activities that had political ends. This led to a confrontation between NDP leaders and the Brotherhood. Both, as this chapter shows, were from the same generation, and came to realize that they were competing over the same political field.

Sayed Zinnari has discussed his memories of that time, stating that:

> In the early 1980s, the *da'wa* was born. We [the Islamic activists] were young and the then NDP leaders such as Yousef Abdel Salam and Mohammad Abu Taleb were calling us *ya wad* (plu. *wlad*) (boy), and we called them *ya a'm* (uncle). In the late 1980s, the new generation of the NDP viewed us as rivals. Consequently, we started to face a new form of harassment, oppression and persecution from the security apparatuses. Many Kerdasians, though they had sympathy for us, started to view our activities as potentially harmful to the town. In the early 1990s, it increasingly became dangerous to organize activities that we had carried out previously, except on specific occasions such as Ramadan and Eid. [...] Charitable work also became one of the things that many people undertook, such as businessmen and NDP members. Ever since, it has been no surprise to see a corrupt person organizing charitable events such as *Mawaid al-Rahman* (charity *Iftars*—fast-breaking meals during Ramadan), or making a donation to build or renovate a mosque (Zinnari, Interview)

It is true that local MB networks had by then gained considerable experience in the domain of public work, having a great knowledge of the local communities on Cairo's peri-urban

frontier. But from the early 1990s on, their social work could be considered symbolic in comparison with the work undertaken by the new generation of the local NDP leadership. This was due to the easy access of the local ruling party to the state's resources and the party's ability to access networks of 'friendly' businessmen. Most importantly, as the previous chapter argued, this was also because local NDP leaders were able to utilize the contradictory structure of the SLA. Thus, it is true that the mosque movement, which later became a local organization of the MB, had introduced the initial model of social work. But it was the NDP that later captured it structurally.

As a consequence, beginning in the 1990s, the MB carried out social work, which in fact fulfilled the more important need for ritualized group activity. Kerdasa's NDP, by contrast, made serious efforts to mobilize state institutions to develop the town's infrastructure, such as building schools, paving roads, improving al-Seyahi Street and developing public services (see the previous chapter). The NDP's duties in that era were expanded to represent "the myth of state developmentalism." (Vannetzel, 2017, p. 225). The MB engagement in social work, in contrast, was restricted to small-scale activities in mosques and during religious seasons. It can be observed that the aim of the later activism was organizational rather than societal. Its intention was to glue the new generation of Brotherhood members together, establishing shared norms and acts that could give meanings to their gatherings. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, charitable work in Kerdasa was not associated with the MB; it was rather attached to the "good people" in the NDP.

This analysis partly corresponds with Saba Mahmood's findings on the Mosque Movement. The essence of her argument is that the aim of *da'wa* practices were mainly internal and self-constructing. However, it is worth stating that Mahmood may have observed an advanced

phase of the evolution of this movement, when the mosque movement had already established itself on a new ground based on 'the local', and their pioneers had dispersed and found new organizational settings for their gatherings. In Kerdasa, it is indeed the case that the mosque movement had revolutionized 'public work' in its early period during the late 1970s and 1980s, but the evolution of local political field in the Mubarak era overran their contribution, pushing them to organizational forms that stressed their peculiarity, which eventually distanced them from the local community. This also took place as a result of the rise of a new generation of NDP local leaderships that were facilitated by rationalizing neighbourhoodism and the development of local political field. Hence, this generation viewed the mosque movement leadership as a rival movement.

In the 1990s, much was written about the proliferation of Islamic charitable networks and Islamic private voluntary organizations, especially in Cairo's suburbs (Ayubi, 2003, pp. 148–150; Roussillon, 1998, pp. 375–376; Springborg, 1989, p. 225). It was said that this sector, in the late 1980s and 1990s, was able to compete with the state's welfare system and in some areas replace it (Sullivan, 1994; Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, pp. 33–42). The earthquake that hit Egypt in 1992 gave evidence of that. State institutions failed to provide immediate help to the victims, while the Islamic socio-economic sector, by contrast, gave assistance right from the outset (Ranko, 2015, p. 118). However, other accounts underestimated the assumed competition between the state and the Islamic socio-economic sector, arguing that Islamic charitable practices had been deliberately transformed into development practices. According to Mona Atia, "pious neoliberalism" is a policy, ideology, and governmentality that "reconfigure[s] religious practices in line with principles of economic rationality, productivity, and privatization" (Atia, 2008, p. xvii). Pious neoliberal

ideology "represents the merging of a market-orientation with faith", which "leads to new institutional forms, like private mosques, private foundations, and an Islamic lifestyle market." (Ibid.). In this sense, the Egyptian state in the Mubarak era mobilized the Islamic socio-economic sector, directly and indirectly, to respond to increasing inequalities resulting from the state's neoliberal policies (Ibid., p. 159).

My research in Kerdasa also shows that the assumed relation between the Islamic socio-economic sector and Political Islam was exaggerated. In Cairo's peri-urban fringe in the 1990s, charitable and social work, which is considered the pillar of this sector, was a broad banner that encompassed various kinds of voluntary and semi-voluntary practices and organizations. Figures involved in this sector were from different backgrounds within the local community and most of them acted under Islamic slogans. This was not unusual since popular culture in Egypt and in the whole region, since the 1970s, has increasingly leaned towards Islamization. Pious motivations and terminology have penetrated all aspects of everyday life. For example, an anthropological survey conducted within the clinic of the Mostafa Mahmoud Mosque community, the largest mosque-based clinic in the country, showed that many doctors were unsympathetic to the MB, revealing a wide diversity of political sympathies (the NDP, the Wafd and the leftist Tajammu) (Clark, 2004, p. 66).

My analysis is in keeping with academic studies that have argued that the Islamic socio-economic sector should not be confidently associated with political Islam, but should rather be understood as part of the expansion of informality – a process of local people setting up socio-economic institutions that parallel those in the formal sector. Informality pervades all aspects of *sha'bi* communities, mobilizing local people to establish their informal socio-economic institutions, which are subjected to the formal economy but at the same time

complement it (Singerman, 1995). In this sense, informality is a style of governance that should be recognized as subordinate to formality and as a means for a variety of dominant social actors to accommodate the needs of sections of society at a minimal cost (See Chapter 1). This modality of governance has given rise to what could be identified as "local power compacts" under the state's informal supervision (Ismail, 2006a, p. 46). In her work on Bulaq al-Dakrur, Salwa Ismail argues that in *sha'bi* quarters "the state is brought down to the level of the people, where it becomes a site of everyday squabbles and disputes." (Ibid., p. 47).

In considering Cairo's peri- urban frontier, in which socio-economic life increasingly leaned towards informality facilitated by state governance under the cover of a pious popular culture, it is understandable that the contribution of the Islamic movement would become indistinguishable from the larger currents of development. This is the reason why the MB's social and charitable activities were imperceptible in Kerdasa. In my work, most people I talked to were not aware of MB activism in the town, except on the eve of the parliamentary elections. Many of my interviewees stated that they did not notice any MB activity when they were young in the 1990s. Of course, the change in attitude of the Mubarak regime towards the MB starting from 1987 also played a major role in making the Brotherhood avoid being active in public. Nevertheless, another reason is that the regime in the 1990s became confident that a new generation of its local men had gained enough experience and became sufficiently qualified to take over the role that had been played by the mosque movement. However, this was at the expense of the Islamisation of the political field itself, where even those from the NDP were required to be pious.

M. H., a member of the MB in Kerdasa, was in the early 2000s placed in charge of a Brotherhood group (*usra*, lit. 'family'—the smallest unit in the MB structure). He confirmed that the MB's activities in the 1990s and 2000s were confined to *da'wa*, which means in the ikhwani terminology convincing new brothers to join the Brotherhood, being active in its hierarchy and ready to report for duty if called upon by the upper echelons. When I talked to him in March 2016, he said that he had criticized the MB for its inactivity in public work. He blamed the top-down decision-making process inside the Brotherhood, which often led to the appointment of individuals who lacked the necessary skills for representing the MB. Many times, he stated, the ikhwani grassroots had recommended individuals who were more suitable, but the Guidance Bureau (*maktab al-irshad*) usually ignored their suggestions. It was even the case that some individuals who were assigned to representative positions, as M. H. and other interviewees confirmed, had initially opposed their 'assignments' but were then compelled to take them up (M. H. Interview).[57]

In his own opinion, Abdel Salam Bashandi was not the right person to be the MB's candidate for the parliamentary elections in Kerdasa. Bashandi, who had an Islamic bookstore in the town, lacked experience and knowledge of local needs. He was a modest public speaker and was reluctant to attend local social events (Ibid.). For these reasons, he was barely known by most Kerdasians and no one was able to think of him as someone who might help in the town's social affairs. This was in contrast to other contemporary local NDP figures, who

[57] In my interview with the son of Tareq Zaki Mikkawi, he also confirmed that his father was compelled to run as a candidate in the parliamentary election, though he himself believed that he was not sufficiently qualified. (Moa'z Mikkawi, Interview).

were always busy engaging with local people, attempting to solve their problems and attending their social events. Obviously, M. H. and other MB members were evaluating Bashandi's performance as compared to that of his predecessors in the 1980s and early 1990s (such as Tareq Zaki Mikkawi and Salah Abu Ismail). However, they did not observe that from the late 1990s the role of the MB's local figures was fundamentally changed. While they previously had commitments towards their wider social spaces, under the new conditions they were barely able to represent the MB in their localities. But if the MB's activism was unseen by locals, then how could they challenge the hegemony of the NDP in Cairo's peri-urban fringe and achieve remarkable results in the general election after the fall of the Mubarak regime? The answer is the politics of identity.

It is true that the local branches of the NDP in the Cairo per-urban fringe were more powerful and active on the ground, having the opportunity, capacity and experience to utilize the state's resources in general elections. However, local leaders of the NDP could not reach beyond their localities, since their role was to represent their micro space, their towns. Thus, they had no means of campaigning on the *district* level, where every district encompasses hundreds of thousands of voters. In contrast, the local MB figures in the 1990s were barely known in their localities and had no experience in dealing with local issues. But since the MB's popular mobilization had been based on provoking religious emotions and identity politics, they could easily campaign on a macro level. Moreover, since the NDP's socio-political mobilization was based on neighbourhoodism, this meant that the local NDP in a town found itself competing for resources with the NDP in other towns. In the 1990s and 2000s, this led to fragmentations in the party as local branches constantly fought with each other. Hence, the NDP's dilemma in the 1990s and 2000s was that neighbourhoodism, which

was the core of its version of social mobilization, could not work on the macro level. Neighbourhoodism was indeed the regime's strongest weapon, but on the scale of the national elections, it could not overcome the politics of identity. It is no surprise, then, that for decades the Egyptian regime had been keen to adopt laws that prohibit politics with a religious character.

3.4 Spaces of Sheikhs: The Struggle over Mosques

The 1990s was a crucial juncture in the local history of Cairo's peri-urban frontier. This was the period in which the NDP pulled the rug from under all other local networks. The State Security Investigations Service (SSIS) increasingly became involved in local politics. The SSIS not only began to vet all local figures who wanted to run in local elections; it also became common for this apparatus to obstruct the organization of *da'wa* and charitable events, paving the way for the NDP to dominate all levels of public work, thus monopolizing the representation of local space. The locals' fear of secret informants (*mukhbireen*) became pervasive. Islamists, therefore, were pushed back to the last remaining social space in which they could function: mosques.

Until the 1980s the sheikhs of Cairo's peri-urban fringe had nothing to do with politics. According to one of the 1980s generation of sheikhs, Khaled Sa'd, sheikhs who led mosques and were in charge of teaching local people religious affairs were "Quranic" (*Qura'nion*). Their responsibility was restricted to teaching people how to read the Quran, the correct ways to pray and fast, and explaining to them the *ahkam al-shari'ah* (sharia rules) of their personal life. Sa'd also referred to these figures as 'Azharis' (*Azhariyyon*), a generation of sheikhs who studied at the University of al-Azhar or learned from Azharis, and who adopted

Ashʿarism, a flexible theology in Islam that distances its adherents from politics (Khaled Sa‘d, Interview). However, from the late 1970s this tendency would encounter many reasons for resentment. First of all was Nasser's policy of marginalizing al-Azhar, and undermining its relative autonomy (Ghazzal, 2008, pp. 78–80). Second was the proliferation of western lifestyle practices that accompanied Sadat's policies of *infitah* and the rise of middle-class income (Khaled Sa‘d, Interview; (Amin, 2001)). Thirdly the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement, the Camp David accords, were a shock for most Azharis, who believed that any political settlement with Israel should be forbidden ("Editorial: Mosque and State in Egypt," 1985). Azhari sheikhs were consequently confronted by a new generation of populist sheikhs who rose after Mubarak came to power, many of whom had been released from political prison before the assassination of Sadat. Those sheikhs were imprisoned with Salafists influenced by the emerging Wahhabism in the Arab Peninsula.

Across Cairo's peri-urban fringe, therefore, mosques from the mid-1980s became an arena for serious debates on many issues, notably the relation between the Islamic movement and the state. Kerdasa, Nahia, Imbaba and other towns witnessed the rise of populist sheikhs who started to evoke Islamic *da‘wa*, blending *ikhwani* thinking of the 1960s (particularly Sayed Qotb's writings) with elements from Wahhabism, and demanded that the government apply *shari‘a* law immediately.[58] This mobilization was described by Khaled Sa‘d as a "*da‘wa* revolution" (Khaled Sa‘d, Interview). In late 1992 this ideological mobilization resulted in *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya* announcing the establishment of the "Emirate of Imbaba" in the sprawling informal district of Imbaba just north of Cairo. State security forces responded

[58] On the evolution of Salafi thoughts in Egypt, see: (Gauvain, 2012, pp. 33–51).

harshly by besieging Imbaba and putting an end to the uprising. Between 1994 and 1998, hundreds of youths were arbitrarily arrested in Cairo's peri-urban frontier (Kienle, 2001, p. 133). In Kerdasa alone, 88 youths were arrested and convicted for being members of the Islamic Jihad organization (Different Interviews). It is no surprise that Islamists, at that time, came to evoke Kerdasa's 1965 'disaster', assuming that there had been a deliberate policy of discrimination and marginalization from the state towards their town. How can we explain this kind of tense relationship between the regime and jihadists?

It is not easy to analyze the jihadi movement locally, and separately from the broad cultural and ideological currents in Egypt, and perhaps the Middle East as a whole, in this era. Much ink has flowed in analyzing the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism, or simply Jihad, from the late twentieth century. It is not the aim of this section to re-write what has been established in previous research,[59] where the study of Islamic fanaticism and terrorism has become an independent academic "jihadology" industry. Instead, I will focus here on the local dynamics that facilitated the production of this tense relationship, which one of its results was the emergence of ideological jihad in the peri-urban fringe. Hence, our focus is on understanding the interaction between the micro and the macro; how socio-cultural mobility at the local level can feed and mobilize wider ideological currents on the national level. This is not to suggest that the previous macro-readings of jihad in Egypt or anywhere

[59] In that period, according to Galal Amin, Egypt witnessed an unprecedented increase in income because of the rents that were generated by oil revenues, labor remittances, the Suez Canal, tourism, and foreign aid (Amin, 2001, p. 39). Thus, the country witnessed a very strong trend towards the importing of luxuries that was reflected in everyday life. (Ibid, p.52).

else are not useful, but our aim rather is to uncover micro variables that contributed to that phenomenon.

To understand how *jihadi* ideas developed in Kerdasa, we need to go back to the 1980s, when the town mosques became forums for populist sheikhs who took it upon themselves to "forbid wrong" (*nahi 'an al-munkar*), and to call on local people to abandon sin. The proximate cause of their call was a protest against the western lifestyle that emerged due to Sadat's *infitah* policies. Cairo's outskirts were extremely affected by this development. The Haram Area, a district that every commuter passed through to reach the city centre of Cairo, became one of the famous nightlife districts in Cairo (Ansari, 1984, p. 132). Entertainment life in Cairo was not novel in Cairo. Nightlife districts had come and gone in other parts of the city throughout the twentieth century. The novelty lies in the 'local response' by the surrounding communities. This could be attributed to the fact that the Pyramids' Plateau became from the late 1970s a resort area where some of "the richest and most influential persons, including the president, built little huts and small villas that distorted the scenic beauty of the area" (Ibid.). Thus, the area was perceived as a 'neighborhood' that associated national politics with richness and western life-style. In nutshell, this area was a practical example that provoked collective responses by the surrounding localities including mosques. Subsequently in the late 1980s, the first Intifada in Palestine would strengthen the political element in the mosque movement (Sa'd, Interview; Mohammad Ghizlani; Interview).

This conclusion could be derived from the debates that mosques had embraced in the 1980s. The sheikhs of Cairo's peri-urban belonged to two separate camps that had distinct tendencies. Firstly, those who came from an Azhari background, and were left in an ideological and cultural vacuum after the Egyptian state abandoned them, became unable to

relate themselves to any cultural project sponsored by the state. These sheikhs found themselves closer to the MB, since its version of *da'wa* stresses the priority of nurturing the individual Muslim gradually and their political agenda is reformist, a version of religious practice that was not difficult to hold in a context where the public sphere witnessed a relative degree of freedom. The second tendency comprised the populist sheikhs, as described above, who shared much with the Azharis but adopted a more radical stance towards the government and in interpreting *sharia*. However, in many cases the line between the tendencies was blurred. If we scrutinize the rhetoric on both sides, we find that it had no coherent political agenda. Instead, it was a series of condemnations: of the current lifestyle, history, culture and politics, all of which fell under the slogan of 'Islam is the solution'. The only major difference between them is tactical rather than strategic. While the Muslim Brothers (who attracted the Azharis) called for a gradual involvement in the political field, jihadists sought to challenge the authoritarian order of local politics by imposing themselves immediately.

In Kerdasa, Salah Abu Ismail represented the first tendency, while Ali al-Qinawi represented the second. Abu Ismail was born in the village of Hurmos, near Imbaba. He was arrested in 1954 and 1965 for being a suspected member of the MB, but on the second occasion he was released after a declaration of repentance (Azooz, 2012). In 1972, he was appointed as the Chief of Staff of Sheikh al-Azhar, a high profile position that allowed him to be a public figure and to be acknowledged as an Islamic scholar. Being active in *da'wa* (i.e. a preacher and a *khatib* in Friday prayers) made him a popular *sheikh* in the region, and he was therefore invited by many Islamic religious, cultural, educational and media institutions in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and UAE to deliver lectures and religious talks. By 1976, he had

gained enough respect and veneration to be trusted across the whole of Cairo's peri-urban fringe, gaining the support of the local elites of Ausim, where he was elected to parliament, a position he held until his death in 1990. Even the Ausim NDP (especially from Ghurab family, the local arm of the ruling party in the town) would not think to compete with him but rather supported him as their representative. It is said that he utilized his relations with various entities in Greater Cairo to employ hundreds from his constituency in private and public foodstuff factories (Various Interviews).

From the early 1980s, Abu Ismail became a problematic public figure due to his stance towards the government, as well as the Islamic movement in general. His testimony before a court in 1981 for what was known as the "al-Jihad Organization Case",[60] which was published and reprinted several times, became one of the most important references for that decade's Islamists, even though it was no more than a legal testimony (Abu-Ismail, 1984). It actually provoked many other sheikhs from al-Azhar to respond, since it carried radical interpretations of *sharia,* explicit critiques of the government and implicit sympathy for jihadists. This was despite the fact that Abu Ismail was an MP and a high-profile employee in the state itself. However, given the fact that the 1980s witnessed a degree of tolerance towards Political Islam, we can understand how Mubarak's Egypt, in its first decade, stood

[60] 'The Case of al-Jihad Organization' was a series of trials that were held after the assassination of Sadat. Over two years, hundreds of people from different locations were called to the court to testify. The State Security Court ruled in 1984 that the confessions of many defendants were obtained through torture, describing the use of torture during interrogation as "medieval, inappropriate for the modern age, and a violation of human rights and the constitution" (Brown, 2006, p. 98).

impotently as it watched Islamization penetrate sensitive positions that allowed it to reach the public.

From his testimony, one can get an impression of the great esteem and reverence Abu Ismail enjoyed not only from his locality, but also from jihadists behind bars and the court itself. He defended jihadi defendants (Ibid., pp. 93-94), promoted the MB's doctrines (Ibid., pp. 43-44), accused the government of not being serious in applying *sharia* (Ibid., p. 29), and called on people with Islamic backgrounds to run in the parliamentary elections in order to force the state to change secular laws and to adopt an Islamic constitution (Ibid., p. 66). It is not difficult, nevertheless, to notice that what provoked Abu Ismail was the proliferation of taboo items. In his testimony, he found it paradoxical that the government, at that time, imposed restrictions on the selling of subsidized meat, which is *halal*, while it did not in selling liquor, which is *haram* (Ibid., p. 73). Abu Ismail, moreover, was a hard-working MP. Alone, he submitted more than seventy interpellations on various matters and he led many lobby groups inside the parliament to discuss and change several laws to be in harmony with his vision of *sharia* (Sa'd, Interview).

For these reasons, Abu Ismail and his followers (who were mostly from the MB) were convinced that a change in Egyptian governance was possible and the clash with the secular state could be avoided. This conclusion made him spontaneously a centre for hundreds of MB followers who embraced him as a figure and promoted his activities, especially as his version of *da'wa* and politics was consistent with the third General Guide Umar al-Tilmisani's vision of public work (Pargeter, 2013, pp. 100–101). Every two months in Kerdasa, Abu Ismail held a popular lecture that was attended by thousands of local people from Greater Cairo. MB followers took up the task of publicizing his lectures, roaming the

peri-urban fringe with their loudspeakers to invite local people to attend (Sa‘d, Interview). By the late 1980s, Abu Ismail had become a role model for dozens of Azhari and ikhwani sheikhs who became active in the Mosque Movement across the whole peri-urban fringe. However, Abu Ismail had a relatively pragmatic stance towards the government. In his testimony and ongoing debates with other sheikhs in Greater Cairo's mosques, he refused to declare the infidelity of the government or rulers (*takfir*) (Abu-Ismail, 1984, pp. 60–61). This stance was opposed by an emerging jihadi tendency within the mosque movement in the region that considered rulers not Muslims due to their reluctance to enforce *sharia* and for behaviour that, in their opinion, was in contravention of Islam. In the 1980s and 1990s, Ali al-Qinawi, who was a Kerdasian real estate contractor, was the figurehead of this tendency. At that time, al-Qinawi was one of a handful of sheikhs who were specialists in Islamic *aqidah* (creed). One of his students described him as “the word of god walking on earth” (Sa‘d, Interview). His lessons were attended by many individuals who were later to become high-profile consultants for the state. One of these was Ahmed Hulaiel, a former consultant for the Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (Ahmed Hulaiel, Interview). Moreover, al-Qinawi was a respected figure in Kerdasa and its surrounding area, where he contributed to the assistance of local people, especially in reconciliation councils (Hussain Omar, Interview).

Khaled Sa‘d, his adherent and relative, stressed the importance of the period between 1981 and 1985 in shaping al-Qinawi's thought. In 1981, al-Qinawi was among hundreds who were arrested following the assassination of Sadat. In political prison, from 1981-85, he met Hafiz Salama (one of the leaders of the popular resistance in Suez during the Israeli occupation), whose jihadi ideas had a strong influence on him. He also lived with Abdel Fattah al-Zeini,

Hasan Abu al-Ashbal and Abu Ishaq al-Huweini, who had received their theological education from the leading proponents of Wahhabism, Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani and Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz (Sa‘d, Interview).

Unlike Abu Ismail, who was more preoccupied with seeking friends inside the state and behaving as a politician, al-Qinawi chose to work informally in mosques. His charisma and eloquence as well as his challenging stance towards the government made him trusted by a nascent tendency of populist devout youths, who would later become the next generation of populist Salafi sheikhs and the hardcore of the al-Jihad Organization. By the late 1980s, al-Qinawi was delivering five *da‘wi* lectures on a weekly basis alongside the Friday *khutba*. Furthermore, he encouraged his adherents to deploy in the mosques of Kerdasa and neighbouring towns. Thus, they became a nuisance to the Azhari faction and the Ikhwan (Ibid.).

While it is said that Abu Ismail and al-Qinawi had a good personal rapport (Ibid.), their followers did not. This may well have been due to the Salafi attitude towards the Islamic movement, which accused it of making compromises with the state and ordinary people to attract more followers at the expense of *aqidah*. Salafists also accused the Ikhwan and the Azharis of misinterpreting the Quran and Sunnah to avoid confronting people and enforcing them to comply with *sharia* law. In other words, jihadists advocated an immediate involvement in the local political field, which was monopolized by the NDP men.

In contrast, local Ikhwan tried their best to avoid Salafists, firstly because their leaders not only believed that these disputes were a waste of time, but also thought that their involvement in the political field should be gradual to avoid intimidating the Mubarak

regime. Secondly, because the MB historically presented itself as a group for all factions of Sunni Muslims in Egypt, whether they were Sufis or Salafists (Ashraf Rajab, Interview).[61] This is why the only political knowledge of which the Ikhwan had gained an in-depth experience was of a practical and organizational nature. However, Salafists could not be avoided. They always sought out confrontation as they claimed that this was their duty, since they were called upon by god to enjoin good and forbid wrong (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-n-nahy ʿan al-munkar*).

In the late 1980s, Ikhwani sheikhs in the mosque movement accused Salafists of being a tool of the regime. Thus, Kerdasa mosques became an arena of serious disputes between the two movements. In many cases, Salafists and Ikhwan engaged in hand-to-hand fighting, as occurred a number of times in the al-Sheikh mosque in the middle of the town in 1990-1 (Sa‘d, Interview).

However, if we subject these mosque disputes to scrutiny, it appears that the *Ikhwani* and Azhari sheikhs had no interest in the Salafi debates themselves. In fact, they rarely engaged the Salafis in debate (Rajab, Interview). They were only worried of being excluded from the last arena that remained to them at a time when a wave of Salafists had decided to disqualify them from teaching religious affairs to lay followers. As Sa‘d, who became one of Salafi sheikhs in the early 1990s, stated: “Ikhwan and Azharis were never keen to discuss *sharia*

[61] Rajab said that at that time Salafi sheikhs were criticizing Azharis and Ikhwan for saying “*Sadaqa Allaah al-'Azeem*” (Allah Almighty has spoken the truth) after reading the Quran, claiming that it is *bid'ah* (innovation).

issues with us, or what Allah or the prophet Mohammad said, they just wanted to feel free to monopolize mosques' *manabir* (sing. *manbar*, a pulpit)" (Sa'd, Interview).

Thus, this section argues that in the 1980s and 1990s, the mosque movement in Cairo's peri-urban fringe was, in its essence, a struggle over representation in the Mosque, which was increasingly penetrating the political field. This chapter and the previous one argued that social spaces, from the late 1970s, became the subject of a new socio-political mobilization. I have suggested that the development of the political field was associated with the tendency of local people to objectify their towns, villages and neighborhoods, giving them identities and claiming to represent them. In this section, I have argued that the mosque movement in Cairo's outskirts, or sheikhs' disputes over mosques there, should also be understood from this angle. It reflected on the one hand the struggle over politicizing the mosques' social space, and secondly, the jihadists' desire for more and immediate involvement in the political field.

The then generation of the al-Jihad Organization in Kerdasa was inspired by these debates. Mohammad al-Ghizlani, a prominent Jihadi leader who was arrested in 1994 and released after the removal of Mubarak in 2011, was one of those for whom these debates sharpened his awareness, according to his own statements (Mohammad Ghizlani, Interview). In a context in which sheikhs were competing for mosques, Salafi sheikhs developed an ideology that opposed the reformist methods that were adopted by the MB and Azhari sheikhs. Therefore, the latter were tilting towards adapting with the regime's 'red lines' and to open to the other liberal and secular parties in the political arena (i.e. the MB's alliances with the Wafd party and the SLP). In contrast, the jihadi direction sought to invest in Islamic vanguardism to challenge the authoritarian control over the political field; hence, crossing

the red line. In other words, jihadists wanted to expand their influence beyond the social spaces of sheikhs and the mosque movement would pay the consequent price.

Thus, we can explain the tense relation between a direction in the mosque movement (jihadists) and the state by the rise of new political social agents from mosques who wanted to translate their cultural capital to political capital in order to be involved in the local political field. The jihadi direction in the mosque movement, driven by different dynamics on the macro level discussed in this chapter, concluded that they should extend their influence outside of mosques, and consequently became eligible to represent the wider social space. However, a new generation of the NDP local figureheads and security agencies were on the lookout.

After crushing the Imbaba riot, however, the Egyptian bifurcated state decided to shut down the mosque movement in Cairo's peri-urban fringe, claiming that all informal activities in mosques were a source of *takfiri* thought without distinction, in all *da'wa* movements. In Kerdasa, a large security campaign began in 1994 and ended in 1997 by neutralizing mosques, driving the remaining few Salafists underground, whose activities were thereafter practiced on a very small-scale (Various Interviews).

When Habib al-Adily was appointed as Minister of the Interior in 1997, he employed new tactics to extend the SSIS's domination of mosques in Greater Cairo. In addition to filtering all *khatibs* and *imams* and putting them under the scrutiny of the SSIS, he favoured a new

strain of Wahhabism that was supportive of autocratic regimes: *Madkhalism*[62]. This version considers obedience to rulers (*wali al-amr*) a part of worshipping God, regardless of the rulers' cultural and ideological background. By the 2000s, Mohamad Said Raslan, a *Madkhali* sheikh, was backed by the SSIS to fill the vacuum that repression had left in mosques and to defame other *da'wa* tendencies. In the last decade of the Mubarak presidency Raslan managed to deploy his adherents across the whole region. In the 2000s, the role of mosques as an arena of local mobilization decayed, but with the rise of other platforms, most importantly Internet forums (and later social media), new methods of resistance and mobilization were developing.

Conclusion: The Age of the NDP

The main concern of this chapter has been to understand the Islamic movement's mobilization on the micro level in the Mubarak era, suggesting that even the rise of political Islam can also be viewed as an expression of local struggles over social spaces. These struggles developed from the late 1970s to involve an objectification of space and its continuous redefinition by successive political lesser notables. In local history, therefore, lines were blurred between social groups and struggles took different forms. Section (3.1) elaborated how MB history and the local memory of Kerdasa intertwined through a *mihna* (great adversity, or tribulation) discourse. Each narrative, however, served different kinds of mobilization. The 1965 repression against the town was partially responsible for the

[62] *Madkhalism* is a direction within the larger Wahhabi movement based on the writings of Rabee al-Madkhali, a Saudi sheikh became influential in the 1990s backed by Saudis. Further information on the emergence of Madkhalism in Cairo, see: (Gauvain, 2012, pp. 43–44)

evolution of ‘the local’, thus empowering neighbourhoodism and driving local people to act on a spatial basis. The MB, on the other hand, integrated the story of the “disaster” as an example of its influence beyond the urban middle class in cities. Furthermore, the story could perfectly be fitted into its *mihna* metanarrative on a national scale.

This does not mean that the 1965 military operation against Kerdasa triggered a peculiar history for the town. The whole peri-urban fringe, as was argued in the previous chapter, witnessed the emergence of political localism motivated by different dynamics on the macro level. This social medium established a ground for the emergence of the mosque movement, which enjoyed a kind of protection from the bifurcated state’s institutions, paving the way for a revival of the MB locally, as was shown in Sections (3.2) and (3.3). Hence, the cognitive structure that facilitated the consolidation of the NDP and the SLA was the same that helped social agents from the mosque movement to organize themselves. Later in the 1980s, many of those would come to compete over the political field.

From the middle of 1980s, however, the bifurcated state started to revive its repressive measures, driving a new generation of NDP men to take over ‘public work’. This development made mosques the last remaining arena for the Islamic movement’s mobilization. Nevertheless, sheikhs of the Cairo outskirts were also to be overwhelmed by an internal struggle over the mosques. Hence, Section (3.4) suggested that the Mosque Movement also was another aspect of socio-political mobilization that was shaped and influenced by neighbourhoodism.

By the 2000s, the Egyptian bifurcated state through its local proxies definitively resolved the struggle over the representation of space. By alienating the Mosque Movement and

penetrating mosques through a new wave of *Madkhali* sheikhs who were backed by the SSIS, it became possible to say that the NDP had succeeded in monopolizing socio-political mobilization in most public arenas in the peri-urban fringe, excluding most other social agencies (i.e. Islamists) from the political field. Kerdasians say that the SSIS, since that time, has become involved in most aspects of their lives. It has intervened in NDP politics, mosques, sport clubs and schools, preventing any other local agency of suspect loyalty to emerge, forcing Political Islam to migrate to other arenas outside the town such as universities, or to virtual spheres on the Internet.

This has led to making the ruling party the sole umbrella under which local communities could practise politics. From the late 1980s, Kerdasa's political lesser notables became aware that there was no way to compete over town representation except from inside the NDP. As if it had become a *de facto* totalitarian entity, the NDP captured all means of local mobilization. This fact drove them to develop new means of socio-political mobilization to make them able to win the support of the ruling party. At the same time, their methods had to be capable of convincing local people that they represented their interests. From the early 1990s, therefore, the main form of local mobilization in Cairo's peri-urban fringe would revolve around the NDP as a road to winning local representation. The previous chapter addressed the NDP within its social space. Part of this chapter addressed the evolution of the relationship between the NDP local agents and Islamists. The following chapter will reflect on the competition inside the local NDP itself, which pushed social agents to employ new strategies, notably clannism and kin-based mobilization, in their struggle over the political field.

4

CLANNISM WITHOUT CLANS:

NEIGHBOURHOODISM & KIN-BASED MOBILISATION IN CAIRO'S PERI-URBAN FRINGE

One day in 1990, Sheikh Yousef Abdel-Salam Saleh, one of the most respected figures in the Omar family, went to a light-vehicle factory on the edge of Kerdasa. Abdel-Salam Saleh gave a speech to the workers there, in which he claimed that the owner of their small factory was intending to expand one of his construction projects at the expense of the village's cemetery. He warned them of how such an act is forbidden in Islam, reminding them that everyone would eventually die and might not find a burial place if they did not prevent this. Abdel-Salam Saleh also went with a delegation to the police station in Imbaba (Kerdasa at this time did not have a station, but rather a police post) and filed a complaint against Ahmad Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub, the head of al-Sheikh family and the then-head of the Local Council. He accused him of facilitating the exploitation of a plot of land by a Cairene entrepreneur that was in fact state property (Interviews, May 2016).

In Cairo's peri-urban fringe (and perhaps throughout the whole country), people do not owe their sense of "publicness" [63] to any place as much as cemeteries. In Kerdasa, as with any other community in Egypt, local people are as afraid of being buried alone as they are of living alone.[64] But as Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub denied this accusation and claimed that he, as the head of the Local Council, was using a voluntary donation from the businessman to build a wall for the village cemetery (Mahjoub, Interview), this story may reveal a different side of local politics. It may also reflect the contestation of local elites over representing social space.

This study's previous chapters addressed the context and factors that consolidated neo-localism in Cairo's peri-urban fringe. They argued that different factors led to the establishment of neighbourhoodism as a dominant habitus, driving social agents from different ideological backgrounds to act collectively and organize themselves on a new basis that involved the politicization of social spaces. Chapter 2 suggested that even the SLA and the NDP could be viewed as institutional attempts to rationalize neighbourhoodism. Chapter

[63] Publicness here does not necessarily refer to government provision; rather, it means that the property cannot be traded in markets due to socio-cultural reasons. (Sandler, 2001, p. 10)

[64] In a totally different context, I was told by a friend that in his village in Palestine, people decided to build a new cemetery. Cemeteries are usually built on the edge of villages as they belong to 'the other world'. However, due to the town's expansion over time, the old cemetery had come to occupy a place in the middle of the town surrounded by houses, and therefore could not be expanded to accommodate more dead people. So a new plot of land was allocated on the edge of the expanded town for a new cemetery. However, this new plot remained empty for a long time since no one wanted to be 'the first one' to be buried there. No one accepted the idea of being buried alone. The new cemetery had to wait until the first 'died-by-car-accidents' arrivals whose permission to be buried there was not required (story credit: Ali Habiballah).

3 explored the way in which these attempts ultimately yielded a *de facto* totalitarian NDP that monopolized most of the means of politicizing social spaces especially after expelling Islamists from the political field. This chapter will continue to trace the development of the local political field, trying to explain one the most prominent strategies employed by political social agents to defend their positions: clannism.

The aims of this chapter are twofold: first, to identify the consequences of the social mobility[65] that occurred in Cairo's peri-urban fringe in the late 1980s and 1990s, which was reflected in the rise of a new wave of lesser notables who employed strategies to impose themselves on political field, and thereby in the battle for recognition. The first part of this chapter will address the socio-political impact, from the late 1980s, of the process of urbanization generally, and the Cairene real-estate boom in particular, on social mobility. It will be argued that the transformation of the local economy in the 1980s in Cairo's peri-urban fringe led to the rise of two waves of empowered lesser notables, which led to a 'glut' of their presence (many of them came with the flourishing of the real-estate business), and consequently a fierce political competition among them over the political field. This development contributed to the consolidation of neighbourhoodism, especially after local agents became increasingly aware of the importance of their lived spaces.

[65] Galal Amin defines social mobility as "the degree to which different classes or sections of the population move upward or downward in relation to each other over time, [which is] intimately connected with the most powerful of the social forces that drive us, such as the desire to acquire the esteem and respect of others, the urge to prove oneself superior or to dominate, and the fear of losing any of these" (Amin, 2001, p. 4).

The unprecedented growth of empowered lesser notables drove them to invent new strategies to impose themselves on the political field or to protect their positions within it. Thus, the second part of this chapter will argue that from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s, clannism was the most prominent strategy to be deployed in the struggle over the political field. However, this chapter will also show that clannism was often created *ex nihilo*, as many local agents invented an imaginary family history of political involvement to prove their rootedness in their towns, in order to establish an 'authentic' claim to represent the social space. This practice often took recourse to a form of symbolic violence aimed at other families, in an attempt to exclude their agents from the political field.

4.1 The Age of Real-Estate Contractors

The period from the late 1980s to the year 2000 marks a watershed in the socio-economic history of Kerdasa. In the early 1980s, Kerdasa was a medium-size town accommodating a growing society that consisted of a few large families, along with a larger number of medium and small families. According to government statistics, the population of Kerdasa was 32,972 (Hefny, 1983, p. 41). A study of Kerdasa conducted in the early 1980s estimated that agrarian activities constituted approximately 30% of the town's total production, and were exclusively dedicated to the production of dates and vegetables to be consumed in Cairo. Land ownership was fragmented, with the vast majority of land owners possessing less than three feddans (Habashi, 1982, pp. 303–304). The main economic sector in the town was the production of handcraft items, towards which 2497 families had household looms. Furthermore, there were thirteen medium-scale textile workshops in Kerdasa, whose owners had previously worked in agricultural activities, and who had mostly categorized themselves among low income families before working in this sector (Ibid.). The study also indicated

that in the early 1980s, the vast majority of the Kerdasians were born in their town with an annual increase explained by natural growth and with no tendency to emigrate from the town (Ibid., p. 306).

From the early 1980s to the early 2000s, two interrelated ‘waves’ of lesser notables emerged and dominated local economies in Cairo’s peri-urban fringe. Firstly, the *infitah* beneficiaries, a broad category that arose as a result of Sadat’s open-door policy in the 1970s. This category encompassed small merchants and importers, artisans, and tourism operators. The second wave emerged in the late 1980s as a result of the process of urbanization and the Cairene real-estate boom. It mainly consisted of real-estate contractors and speculators, for whom the *infitah* had also provided an initial impetus.

The first wave had benefited from the oil boom of the 1970s. The rise of external rents (i.e. oil exports, Suez Canal revenues and tourism), as well as emigrant worker remittances, had increased the real income of wide sections of Egyptian society. According to Galal Amin, this boom pushed “large numbers of the population up the social ladder, who traditionally had belonged to the lowest levels of society and allowed them to compete successfully with sections of the middle-class who found their social status rapidly declining” (Amin, 2001, p. 18). In Kerdasa, those who invested in tourism-related industries constituted the majority of this segment. It has been stated that the town was receiving around 300-500 tourists on a daily basis at this time, and that 1000-3000 tourists were present during the holiday and ‘Eid seasons (Habashi, 1982, pp. 304–305).

The rise of the second wave, as stated, was an effect of the process of urbanization, especially the Cairene real-estate boom in the late 1980s and above all the early 1990s. Cairo’s peri-

urban fringe witnessed a rapid phase of urbanization. This was mainly because it offered a solution to the housing problem in the capital and its suburbs. According to David Sims,

> The main reason for the growing attraction of peri-urban areas can be said to relate to the array of affordable housing solutions that the mainly informal housing markets generate in these areas. Land accessibility and price are conducive to informal settlement creep and infill. Also, since development is largely out of sight, there is less prohibition on building on agricultural land than along the informal fringes of the core agglomeration of Greater Cairo […]. In all of peri-urban Greater Cairo, eighteen village administrative units recorded annual growth rates in excess of 4.2 percent per year in the 1996–2006 decade, and together these units contained a population of 722,000 in 2006. (Sims, 2010, p. 72)

This led to the social rise of a new real estate sector within local communities residing in the capital's outskirts, which acquired a new means of accumulating wealth. This second wave can be divided into three interrelated sub-categories. The first group was those who had been previously agrarian workers and had retained plots of land (originally designated for agricultural activities), and who suddenly found themselves in possession of valuable assets due to the process of metropolitanization, having been previously threatened economically due to the decline of the local agricultural sector. The second group was those who had worked in the oil-based states and used their remittances from the late 1970s to invest in the real-estate sector, as a way to secure their savings from inflation. Thirdly, some individuals from the first wave (*infitah* beneficiaries) sought to invest in the emerging sector (in Kerdasa they were a minority).

In Kerdasa, the real-estate business enabled many families to become relatively rich, such as the Ghizlani, al-A'fifi and al-Sa'idi families (Azayzeh, Interview). The growth of tourism from the late 1980s also improved the socio-economic situation of a number of medium and small-size families, such as Abu Rkissa and Abu Issa, who owned textile workshops on al-

Seyahi Street ('tourist street,' previously named 'Market Street') in the town centre (Ibid.).[66] However, from the 1990s, as this section will demonstrate, those who worked in the real-estate business, or in any other sphere related to the construction sector, enjoyed much more prosperity and leeway for development than any other local economic sector.

To explain this further, it is useful to draw a comparison between those who worked in textile manufacturing, on the one hand, and real-estate contractors on the other. The owners of textile workshops had reasons to fear the "bifurcated state".[67] They usually earned their living under constant pressure and threats from the state (Azayzeh, Interview). Since most workshops in Kerdasa, and their labour power, have been considered informal and of ambiguous legal status, they have usually tended to avoid making trouble with the state. This has led them to behave submissively to many actors in local government, who are often involved in corrupt practices, in return for their silence with regard to any suspicious economic transactions (Ibid.). A large proportion of materials and supplies for this sector were frequently obtained on the black market. Nearly all workshops were illegally based in residential buildings (i.e. apartments or stores in residential buildings) (Abu Issa, Interview). Labourers also worked in shifts without any kind of contract and almost without any legal protection (Azayzeh, Interview; Abu Issa, Interview). Thus, those who invested in this sector

[66] No data is available for either the real-estate business or the textile industry's activities in Kerdasa since most of these activities are considered informal.

[67] For further discussion on the informalization of the Egyptian state and its bifurcation, see Chapter 1, Section 1.2.1.1.

had to avoid the state as much as possible and to safeguard themselves by seeking protection from informal networks inside the state itself (Various Interviews).

Furthermore, because textile manufacturing has mainly been based on tourism, as well as the export of textile products to other countries such as the Gulf States, Sudan and Southern Europe, investors in this sector often found themselves dependent on the state institutions that control trading and levy taxes (Ibid.). These institutions could easily jeopardize a whole year's production within a workshop if they decided to delay or freeze a certain shipment of products during the tourist season. Finally, and like any economic activity that depends on tourism, textile artisans were largely dependent on the country's stability and security, which required political stability and economic growth in general. For example, Mohammad Azayzeh, who had been the owner of a textile workshop since the late 1970s, stated that sales of textile products fell considerably after the wave of terrorist acts in the 1990s (Azayzeh, Interview). For these reasons, textile manufacturers rarely participated in any kind of politics, preferring to maintain 'good relations' with actors on all sides of the political spectrum, who are all potential customers.

Real-estate contractors were the other main social agents in Cairo's peri-urban fringe. They had their first impetus from the *infitah,* but flourished from the late 1980s due to the increasing price of land in the Cairene property boom. This boom is said to have doubled the city's size, or at least added land "equivalent to more than a third of the existing city and suburbs" (Dorman, 2007, p. 1601). Many of the upper classes have subsequently abandoned the city to live in gated communities on the outskirts. A large number of residential projects, therefore, have been undertaken, which have led to numerous research papers on the increasing gap between classes in Egypt classes, and which have criticized the 'neglectful'

role of the state towards Cairo proper (See Chapter 1). Yet Egypt's observers have been oblivious to the 'collateral impacts' of this phenomenon, not least the fact that these projects have actually recruited hundreds of thousands of workers in the construction sector, such as contractors, workers and others from the mining and quarrying sector. Although these jobs were short-term, unskilled, and an economic *cul-de-sac*, one should not overlook the consequences of the rise of a new sector in the economy, and the socio-political networks that emerged at both the national and local levels.

Unlike merchants and tourism-dependent craftspeople, who were subordinated to the "bifurcated state", real estate entrepreneurs had a greater leeway for action, making their situation a more comfortable one. However, it should be understood that this 'leeway' was a result of contradictory state regulations and laws that implicitly allowed real-estate contractors not only to pursue informal economic activities, but also to enjoy the protection of the state itself. From the late 1980s, the vast majority of urban constructions has been developed on what had been privately-held agricultural land, and must therefore are to be considered informal (Sims, 2010, p. 97). However, in Cairo's informal areas "the security of building owners, apartment owners, and apartment renters is remarkably good" (Ibid., p. 110). Residents have no reason to fear eviction, "mainly because the state maintains a policy of providing compensation or alternative accommodation for affected families, regardless of their documented property claims or lack of them" (Ibid.). Therefore, any attempt to clear an informal development would prove practically impossible.

Furthermore, although property owners in informal areas have no "clear, registered title to their plots of land, this does not at all limit their ability to sell properties at full market values through a number of quasi-legal and informal means" (Ibid.), thus prompting their occupants

to invest continuously in the development of their properties. Moreover, the security of tenure has also been beneficial for the rental of housing units. Both the old and new rent-control system favored tenants over landlords, even if there is no written rental contract. This has meant that informal urban construction has had to be continuously active, since owners have become increasingly unwilling to lease, preferring to keep their properties empty for the sake of the future (i.e. their offspring), a tendency that also encouraged more development to meet the local need (Ibid.). Hence, long live informal real-estate contractors!

Ironically, the state's tolerance of (or powerlessness towards) informal urbanization worked to empower sections of the local populace, which later produced emboldened opponents who took political action against the bifurcated state. As we will see, those who worked in the real-estate business had different attitudes not only towards their local communities, but also towards the state. Firstly, their work allowed them to cultivate connections with various entities and groups on the local and regional levels, including figures in the bureaucracy, as well as access to both formal and informal markets. Secondly, because they were less subordinated to the bifurcated state, they were more likely to challenge it. Not surprisingly, as has been mentioned in Chapter 3, many Islamists worked in this sector, or at least did so at one stage of their lives.

In Cairo's peri-urban fringe, the construction sector has attracted hundreds of thousands of labourers since the late 1980s. The rapid real-estate expansion in Egypt's desert cities drew in a large number of national and international corporations. The expansion in informal areas and the peri-urban frontier, on the other hand, has attracted mainly local small-scale contractors, who managed through their savings, as well as their social relations with local communities, to establish small firms to meet the needs of local expansion. In Kerdasa, many

people from different families established construction firms and recruited Kerdasians to work in their projects. The following paragraphs will examine figures from the Omar family, who were involved from the 1980s in the real-estate sector.

The first figure we will consider is Sheikh Mohammad Mahdi Ghizlani of the Omar family, who returned from Kuwait in the late 1980s. Through his personal savings and the support of his family, he established a construction firm, which aimed to accommodate the local expansion of the town. In the 1990s, Kerdasa witnessed an unprecedented expansion in which people started to leave the old town and build on the agricultural land that surrounded it. New neighbourhoods were built to accommodate the population growth and waves of immigrants, who came mainly from other suburbs in Greater Cairo. Mahdi Ghizlani's firm constructed large parts of the new buildings in the 1990s. As he is a member of the Omar family, one of the largest *a'ailat* in Kerdasa that has had kinship and marriage relations with other large and medium-sized families in the town, he was easily able to implement many small-scale projects by utilizing kinship network. Furthermore, because he was involved in Islamic preaching (*da'wah*), many people considered this to be a sign of honesty (*amana*) and perfect morality (*itqan*). Later, in the late 1990s, he was able to expand his business outside the town to develop other residential projects in the 6th of October City, al-Muqattam and New Cairo City (Different Interviews).

As we have seen, working as a contractor in the real estate sector in the 1990s and 2000s had many advantages. Beside the quick profits and low risks entailed once the initial investment was secured, contractors were able to have access to a wide range of networks from different sectors of society at both local and regional levels. They would usually be open to other entrepreneurs they worked with, as well as hundreds of workers and artisans of different

backgrounds. Most importantly, they would have connections with figures from the upper middle-class, who often sought small-scale contractors as they were more affordable than the large formal companies. These upper middle-class figures usually came from varying social sectors, such as high-ranking public employees, professionals, and employees of international corporations, among others. Such connections were useful as they attracted more customers.

Many small-scale contractors hope to be referred by their upper middle-class customers to other customers by word of mouth. By obtaining a good reputation, they would thereby be able to expand their business. A few of them would parlay their 'important connections' into long-term futures, like Mahdi Ghizlani, who helped his relatives especially, along with friends and Kerdasa's inhabitants (*ahl el-balad*) generally. In the early 2000s, for example, Mahdi Ghizlani undertook a project to develop a gated neighbourhood in Cairo owned by a Cairene entrepreneur. This entrepreneur was known to have kinship ties with persons high up in the judiciary. Due to these kin relations, he was able to arrange for one of his young relatives in the office of the district attorney to become appointed as a judge. Likewise, he offered his 'free services' to many Kerdasians, most of whom had bureaucratic problems regarding licenses of various kinds, and some of whom wanted to be hired in the public sector (Hussain Omar, Interview).

By the late 1990s, Mahdi Ghizlani had gained the title of *Sheikh al-'Arab*. This informal title refers to any trusted person who is active in solving local problems. It is said that he was called on by other families, from other towns in the region, to settle disputes and hostilities between local people. Thus, he was a "mediator". Mediating as a social practice had been the main 'political' role for local figureheads prior to the early 1980s. However, as previous

chapters have shown, local politics have fundamentally changed after the 1980s, and social mediating became less important in the political field. Nevertheless, Mahdi Ghizlani was thereby able to become a trusted figure for local people, as a consequence of his relatively long period as a contractor, which helped him to cultivate connections and accumulate a knowledge of diverse networks in the region. Sheikh Mahdi would later become, during the January 25 Revolution and afterwards, the head of the Popular Committee in Kerdasa, which administered the town for more than a year (as will be discussed in Chapter 5).

Hajj Hasan Sayed Ghizlani, also from the Omar family, is another figure who exemplified the role of real-estate contractor in Kerdasa, albeit in an indirect way. From the second half of the 1980s, Hajj Hasan became one of the most prominent real-estate entrepreneurs in Kerdasa. He inherited many plots of land in the town and its surrounding areas, and when real-estate prices rose, he started up his business, buying large plots of agricultural land and subdividing them (Ahmad Ghizlani, Interview). Hasan Ghizlani's activities were facilitated by legislation passed by the Egyptian Parliament in 1981, which excluded agricultural land around cities (adjacent to the urban fabric) from the Protection of Agricultural Land Law (Law no. 116 of 1983.). Other legislation also revised the law concerning the relations between owners and tenants in these areas. These laws allowed landowners in Kerdasa, and in many towns in Cairo's peri-urban frontier, finally to build on their lands legally. Such areas were desirable to many of the middle-class who wanted to settle near their jobs, did not want to live in informal areas, and could not afford to move to the new desert cities.

Hence, those locals fortunate to retain their agricultural land were able to benefit from the new situation. Hajj Hasan was one of them. He was also shrewd enough to realize that the purchase of large parcels of land in order to subdivide and develop them, essentially by

providing basic infrastructure and connecting them with the town by proper roads, would attract many of Kerdasa's new families, as well as newcomers from other suburbs in the capital (Ahmad Ghizlani, Interview). This practice eventually flourished throughout the whole region and quickly raised the socio-economic level of those who pursued it. As with many real-estate entrepreneurs in Cairo's peri-urban fringe, Hajj Hasan, who was uneducated and the eldest of his brothers, began to diversify his business. But most importantly, he took on the responsibility of raising, educating and supporting his family (Ibid).

Hajj Hasan and his brother, Mohammad Sayed Ghizlani, opened a clinic in Kerdasa in the late 1980s. As we saw in Chapter 4, Mohammad Sayed was politically active in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and ran in the parliamentary elections on the Wafd list. The bifurcated state, however, by using its local proxies, was able to obstruct the rise of any independent leader. Later, in the early 1990s, Mohammad Sayed Ghizlani expanded his clinic into a small hospital with a medical lab, which still serves thousands of townspeople monthly at reasonable prices. His hospital employed more than fifty doctors, nurses and workers. From the mid-1990s, the hospital started to perform complex surgery on a par with any public hospital in Cairo. Although some people interviewed by the author considered Ghizlani's project to be a business investment primarily, many others have promoted it as a semi-charitable institution that serves poor and low-income families (*el-ghalaba*). Ahmad Mohammad, al-Ghizlani's son, told the author that his father was a "full-time community service worker" (Ibid.).

However, it is not difficult to observe that such projects exist because they target low-income families. A private hospital in a town in Cairo's peri-urban fringe could not have functioned

without offering an alternative to the existing public hospital there. While government health institutions are notorious for their poor services, a private hospital would have a very good chance of succeeding if it provided better treatment without charging high prices. These businesses work by seeking to attract those who are not satisfied with public health institutions and cannot afford luxurious hospitals in the capital. Dr. Sayed Ghizlani, through his very successful hospital and its services, became one of the most respected figures in Kerdasa. In other words, he was able to accumulate social capital, which would be utilized in imposing himself in the political field would open again after the revolution. Before the January 25 Revolution, he had refused to play any role in politics, despite continuous approaches from the MB, who encouraged him to run as a candidate in general elections (Ibid.).

Dr. Mohammad would become one of the prominent figures to support the Popular Committee in Kerdasa in the post-revolutionary period. On September 19, 2013, the Egyptian Security Forces arrested him along with hundreds of other Kerdasians, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. He died in prison as a result of the terrible conditions there. In February 2014, his funeral was attended by thousands of his townspeople and others from nearby towns and villages, as several videos on YouTube demonstrate (YouTube, February 8, 2014). Posters of him were circulated and hung on town walls, leading him to become known as the 'martyr of Kerdasa' (*shahid* Kerdasa) by many Kerdasians.

Both of the figures examined in this section indicate that there was a strong association between the rise of a new local elite in Cairo's peri-urban frontier and the prosperity of real-estate businesses in Greater Cairo. In her 2006 study of Bulaq Dakrur, Salwa Ismail suggested that "merchants and contractors, as a class of lesser notables, are emerging as

political actors" (Ismail, 2006a, p. 54). Ismail also predicted that these actors, by virtue of their influence within their communities, would either be co-opted by one of the regime's institutions or that their increasing influence would lead to "confrontation and clash with state authorities" (Ibid., p. 52). Ismail examined the rise of local compacts in one of the largest informal communities in Cairo. As this section will show, my research on Kerdasa, which is one of the largest communities in Cairo's peri-urban frontier, supports Ismail's conclusions.

Nevertheless, Ismail placed both real-estate contractors and merchants in charge of wholesale retailing firms within the same category. This section and the subsequent one will differentiate between these two sectors. The rise of local real-estate contractors in Kerdasa in the late 1980s and 1990s cannot be comprehended without its being placed in a wider socio-economic context. It is the Cairene property boom that has had the greatest impact on shaping the social conditions of rising local elites, and which has most provided a new sector of local communities with the means to acquire wealth and power. The Egyptian capital's natural expansion and the construction of new desert cities not only raised the social level of small landowners in the outskirts, but also elevated small-scale contractors who recruited labourers for construction projects.

The state's amendments of building legislation have also played a vital role, since this has allowed local contractors to establish their firms legally, facilitating the transfer of capital from the old socio-economic strata to a new segment that was lucky enough to keep its agricultural land or to invest in the purchase of new land. Finally, and most importantly, the real-estate sector generated its own 'political economy', in which contractors found themselves inevitably mediating between various segments of society, which enabled them

to penetrate different networks: formal and informal, inside and outside the state, on both local and national levels.

However, there is a missing link in the political chain. Social conditions and the improvement of a collective economic situation were not sufficient in themselves to drive social agents into the political field. There were also other factors that make local agents believe that they could succeed in the battle for political recognition. In Cairo's peri-urban fringe, these factors arose from the consolidation of neighbourhoodism as the habitus of the political field. In the previous chapters, we have traced the increasing centrality of a politicization of social spaces, which has been fundamental to the rise of political neo-localism. In this chapter, I will argue that the process of urbanization, along with the Cairene real-estate boom and its socio-economic impact on local economies, radically influenced the perception of social space.

In his PhD thesis on the development of handcraft production in Kerdasa, Mohammad Habashi interviewed many textile workshop owners in the early 1980s, most of whom expressed in different ways that the only use of land was to be sold. One of his interviewees stated that "people say that one loom is better than one feddan" (Habashi, 1982, p. 332). Habashi's interviewees represented an important social sector of former agrarian workers, who revealed the way in which the relationship between people and their lands had been distorted in rural settings in a specific period. Nonetheless, as a consequence of the socio-economic developments that I have traced in this study, local attitudes towards space would later be changed fundamentally to emphasize the importance of locality.

The Cairene real-estate boom led to an increasing ascendancy of real-estate business in general, raising up new agents in the outskirts on the social ladder. This development led to an increasing sense of the importance of local spaces, as they also became economically invaluable, a factor that strongly contributed to the consolidation of neighbourhoodism. Thus, by the early 1990s, it can be said that neighbourhoodism had become established as a cognitive structure, one that has shaped and influenced most social practices in the political field since that time.

As a result of this intensified social mobility, which elevated an unprecedented wave of lesser notables, it can be stated that Cairo's peri-urban fringe had witnessed by the early 1990s a 'glut' of lesser notables, who considered themselves eligible to compete in the local political field. This would have serious consequences for local socio-political mobilization, as it forced local actors to develop new strategies to compete over the representation of their lived spaces. For this reason, and due to the absence of formal political organizations at the grassroots in an authoritarian regime, this period saw the birth of clannism.

4.2 Clannism as a Strategy in the Struggle for Recognition

The previous section was concerned with the impact of the transformation that took place in the local economies of Cairo's peri-urban fringe from the late 1980s, which in general accelerated social mobility and led to an unprecedented growth of empowered lesser notables. Chapter 2 extensively investigated the consequences of this development on local socio-political mobilization, especially with respect to both the NDP and the SLA. It was argued that from the late 1980s the NDP underwent a structural crisis, as its grassroots were to produce many social agents that the structure of the ruling party could not contain. Thus,

the NDP adopted new policies and systems that allowed it to select the most popular candidates. One aspect of this development in Kerdasa was the splitting into two posts of the NDP's local General Secretary position, a practice that was also applied in other towns such as Ausim.

This chapter will go further in examining the development of the political field, to reflect on the role of clannism, which has been the most important strategy to be employed by the rising lesser notables in their struggle over the political field. Nowadays, clan politics is widely utilized in the Cairo outskirts and is considered one of the key elements that have facilitated clientelism, especially in elections, according to many analyses (See Chapter 1). This section, however, will propose a different reading of this context, in which the role of *a'ailat* (sing. *a'aila*, lit. 'family', but refers to 'clan' in this context) has become important politically. This reading will emphasize the need to draw a distinction between 'clan' and 'clannism'.

It is widely agreed that kin-based networks have played an important role in Egyptian local politics, particularly in local mobilization and electoral politics. On the eve of every parliamentary election, dozens of reports and analyses appear that discuss the way the regime induces its local proxies, in rural and peri-urban settings, to mobilize their *a'ailat* to vote on its behalf. It has usually been stressed that "moving to a candidate-centric system and eliminating the requirement of party nomination meant that many of the largest kin networks suddenly found the costs of participating in electoral politics dramatically lowered" (Masoud, 2008, p. 69). These analyses have been based on the long-standing presumption that social identity in Egypt has been closely linked to "status in the network of kin relations" and that the "socialization of children [has] emphasized integration among their kin group"

(Hooglund, 1991, p. 124). Research on informality has also been heavily based on the political potential of family networks. Familial structures in the *sha'bi* (popular) quarters, according to Diane Singermans, are used by people to set up informal socio-economic institutions that parallel those in the formal sector. Not only do these structures aim to maintain service distribution channels, they are also a tool of political participation which *sha'bi* people use to temporize, evade and curb bureaucracy (Singerman, 1995). This chapter will not challenge these premises, but rather will attempt to enrich this approach to clannism by viewing it from a different perspective.

As we have seen, a consideration of clannism is essential to understanding the modern forms of local socio-political mobilization in many areas in Egypt, especially in rural and peri-urban settings. However, it is rare to find, in the Egyptian context, a coherent analysis that can offer a comprehensive explanation of how clans and tribes are able to survive in modern settings and resist the growth of "governmentality" in the Foucauldian sense. In the Egyptian context (and perhaps in many areas in the Arab World), scholarship has usually referred to the role of clans and tribes in an ambiguous way. This is because the concept of 'clan' is itself ambiguous and fluid, and cannot be isolated and extrapolated from its settings. Long ago, Maurice Godelier came to the conclusion that the tribe/clan *are* the political and ritual relations that are constructed when a group(s) decides to exercise a "sort of sovereignty over a territory […] because the social units sharing the territory are kin groups" (Godelier, 2011, p. 39). In this sense, the key to understanding tribalism/clannism is not to search for the tribe/clan in itself, but rather to look for the sovereignty that it represents: its power relations and territory.

Godelier's research was focused on what can be described as a tribal society. Nevertheless, he asserted that no society can be kin-based. On the other hand, the societies of the Cairo peri-urban fringe have had differing structures. They are far from being exclusively clan-based. In fact, as this analysis will show, clans were not politically important in Kerdasa, at least from the early nineteenth century. Clannism in Cairo's peri-urban fringe should be viewed as a consequence of the process of urbanization. It is one of the strategies that has been employed in the struggle between local social agents for recognition, and for the representation of social space. The phenomenon of clannism, moreover, should be disassociated from that of clans. Clannism is a strategy that involves, firstly, the claiming of an 'imaginary clan'. Secondly, it involves a symbolic violence that aims to exclude 'others' from being recognized. Thus, while clans in Cairo's peri-urban fringe had blurred structures, clannism has been very much a concrete reality. In a nutshell, what we find is clannism without clans.

In Kerdasa, local agents started to employ clannism in the context of the politicization of social spaces, which was shaped and influenced by neighbourhoodism. In this sense, clannism was an important strategy in socio-political mobilization. Through clannism, local social agents have been able to claim that they represent a genuine local history in their towns and are 'original' to these places, that is, prior to anyone else. They have articulated themselves with their social spaces in a way that makes them feel that they and their towns cannot be detached. The aim of this strategy has been threefold. Firstly, it has aimed to exclude others. Secondly, it has sought to mobilize a potential grassroots. Thirdly, it has aimed to gain the recognition of the state.

4.2.1 Many Lesser Notables, Few Positions, and No Clans

As we saw in Chapter 2, the rise of the NDP and the establishment of the SLA from the early 1980s represented a new development in Cairo's peri-urban fringe as politics became locally intelligible. In Bourdieu's terms, this signified the rise of local politics as a political field. Chapter 2 also stressed that despite the fact that the NDP and the SLA were an expression of this field's emergence, their encroachment also contributed to a consolidation of the political field itself. It was a dialectical relationship. Nevertheless, local politics in the early 1980s was still nascent. It was characterized by limited competition. This competition was fed by the rise of a first wave of lesser notables, the *infitah* beneficiaries and the remaining ASU veterans, who easily fitted into their positions within the political field. This situation, however, would not last for long, especially after a new wave of lesser notables arose from the late 1980s, as shown in the previous section.

The rise of the second wave, as a result of the process of urbanization and the Cairene real-estate boom, meant that many lesser notables emerged and found themselves eligible to become involved in local politics. This new development led the NDP, from the early 1990s, to implement a new system that compelled all possible local notables to compete against each other in local and general elections. Those who had the capacity to mobilize the most people would win. In Kerdasa, as we saw in Chapter 2, this led to a splitting of the position of local NDP General Secretary into two posts.

Hence, the highly competitive political field from the late of 1980s drove its occupants to deploy various kinds of capital and a variety of strategies. Bourdieu considered strategies to be an expression of "practical sense, of a particular social game" (Lamaison & Bourdieu,

1986, p. 112), by which social agents, individually or collectively, defend their positions, "imposing principles of hierarchization" that favour them (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 101). In Cairo's peri-urban fringe, as the rest of this chapter will propose, clannism was the most prominent strategy to be used by local agents in the political field. However, the following paragraphs will show that clannism in Cairo's peri-urban fringe was created *ex nihilo*, whereby local agents recalled 'imaginary clans' many of which had never existed, or at least not since the early nineteenth century.

As was discussed in Chapter 1, Kerdasa had been a merchant community from- at least- the late eighteenth century, taking advantage of its location as a station for serving the trade routes between the Maghreb, Siwa Oasis, and the rest of Egypt to the east and south, marking "the limit of Egypt on the west and the beginning of Barbary" (Houtsma, 1908, p. 462). Kerdasa was just one centre in a network of centres that controlled the trade route, based on a complex form of local compacts that involved nomadic tribes and which was backed by the Mamluks.

The German explorer, Frederick Horneman, was one of the first Europeans to accompany the caravan trade journey from Kerdasa to Siwa in 1797. He stated that the merchants owned a home at each of the trading centres within this network, with many of them having "a wife and family establishment at each of these houses; and others take a wife for the time, if the stay of the caravan is longer than usual" (Hornemann and Young, 1802, pp. 38–39). In observing "the general character" of these communities, Horneman said, he could not but express a sense of "degradation, self-interestedness, and mean and shuffling disposition, derived from early habits of petty trade, and the manner in which it was conducted, as contradistinguishing those engaged in this traffic, and those who remained at home" (Ibid.).

Such a description is quite consistent with his vision of Egypt as "the land of infidels" (Ibid., p. 2). Nevertheless, to have more than one commercial base in the region suggests that the merchants depended on a socio-political structure that crossed kinship boundaries. Wider compacts and alliances among various groups and territories were needed and might have undermined clan-based mobilization.

Until 1812 Kerdasa, among other villages in the rural hinterland, was ruled by Mohammad Ali Mikkawi, whose offspring, as Ali Pasha Mubārak informs us, were given luxurious houses and palm orchards. However, Mikkawi's rule was too complex to be considered clan-based. His power was that of a merchant-ruler in the age of merchants. He was one part of a regional network and his power can be explained by what we would now call 'geopolitics'.

Nevertheless, the Mikkawis' so-called glorious history was apparently a rather short story. With the fall of Mamluks, they were subjected to the Pasha's revenge and were crushed in 1811-2. According to contemporary Mikkawis, many of their forefathers escaped to Upper Egypt, with the ruling members probably finding refuge with their commercial partners in Tripoli (Mo'ataz Mikkawi, Interview). As mentioned in Chapter 1, some of the Mikkawis managed gradually to return to Kerdasa, but they were now almost powerless.

We do not know much regarding the Mikkawis' status from this point until the later part of the century, for written history rarely records the subsequent narrative of the defeated. We do know, however, a great deal about the social history of Egypt, and some very general knowledge about Kerdasa, in this era. In Egypt, we certainly know that local positions, and the role of middlemen generally, were declining in tandem with the consolidation of a modern bureaucratized state. The state was in the process of replacing rural middlemen with

a new class of urban-based landowners, who lacked any rootedness in local societies. Local positions, therefore, shrunk in size and became restricted to small administrative positions, as represented by the *umda* and more than one *sheikh al-balad*. These positions were distributed to more than one family as a way of establishing a domestic balance. From 1866, the Mikkawis seized the *umda* position in Kerdasa, while the *sheikh al-balad* positions were distributed among the other families, mainly the Omar. Nevertheless, these positions were also declining to the extent that in royal Egypt it was not uncommon to find impoverished *umdas* in many Egyptian villages (Awad, 2018).[68]

Based on written records, we can conclude that clannism had barely any history in Kerdasa until the early twentieth century. In fact, there is also no evidence that kin-based mobilization played a significant political role afterwards. From the early nineteenth century, the town was not isolated from the external world. Many travellers and missionaries visited Kerdasa, especially from the mid-nineteenth century. One of those travellers, G. W. Murray, wrote a book on nomadic tribes in Egypt and Libya. He indicated in a very short note that the Mujabra tribes, who had been based in Cyrenaica (the eastern coastal region of Libya and later in Siwa), had been "active slave-traders, and a small colony of them exist[ed] at Kerdasa" (Murray, 1935, p. 299). The Mujabra, who had been "the merchant princes of the Libyan Desert" (Ibid.), had disappeared from the hinterlands probably in tandem with the rise of Mohammad Ali Pasha.[69] Thus, no one in early twentieth century Kerdasa could

[68] In one of Tawiq al-Hakim's novels, the *umda* of an Egyptian village cannot even understand the meaning of word 'parliament' (al-Hakim, 1939, p. 91).

[69] But even when the Grand Sanusi came to preach in Cyrenaica in the 1840s he found the kind of society where tribes could hardly be political units. According to Evans Pritchard's *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, he found

assume any connection with them. This is supported by the observations of another European traveller in the early 1880s, who saw that many of Kerdasa's inhabitants were preoccupied with "cutting flints for the primitive guns" (Baedeker, 1885, p. 370). This practice could be explained as belonging to the new occupations that accompanied the emergence of modern warfare. The age of the modern state had taken control.

Perhaps the richest description of Kerdasa on the eve of the twentieth century came from the German missionary, Karl Kumm, the founder of the Sudan United Mission, who lived in the town for two years from 1898, during which he learned Arabic (Sauer, 2001, p. 98). Kumm lived with the Kerdasians, dressed and ate like them, and even wore a *tarbush* (the felt cap that became emblematic of Egyptian *effendis*) and *gallabiyah* (the traditional long robe worn by men, particularly in rural areas). He was hosted by many of them, notably the *umda* and his family (the Mikkawis). In one of his report to the Mission in Sudan, Kumm gave a detailed account of local habits, food, and economics, among other features. He stated that the town contained 1500 inhabitants, most of whom were Muslims except for a few Coptic families. Kumm accompanied a caravan to the desert, where he met many Bedouins and learned the desert culture. Finally, he claimed in one of his reports that he had managed in the last two weeks of his stay to treat twenty *fellahin* on a daily basis. However, Kumm's reports do not contain a single word to suggest that clans played a political role in Kerdasa (Ibid, pp. 97-98).

"a congeries of tribes without law or effective government, for the Turks had little control over the interior, but with like values and habits and a community of life which crossed tribal boundaries". (Evans-Pritchard, 1954, p. 62)

Although Kerdasa had lost the political status that it once had in the era prior to the modern state, its local economy continued to adapt and evolve, mainly due to its location near Cairo. The development of a service market increasingly undermined landowners and allowed other groups to rise up socially. For instance, a government survey in 1925 indicated that Kerdasa was "quite a centre for weaving, apparently having 920 looms at work" ("'Nubdha Sinâ'iyya,'" 1925, n. cited by Charlcraft, 2005, p.362). It was also reported by an American botanist, who visited Kerdasa in 1921, that the town had nearly 20,000 date palms, taking advantage of the Nile flood basins (Mason, 1923, p. 23). In consequence, unlike most villages in rural Egypt, Kerdasa witnessed a relatively plural degree of prosperity, in which many of its local inhabitants had better educational prospects. In the second half of the nineteenth century, many families were able to send their children to the *kuttab* (pl. *katatib*), where they were taught a basic level of reading and writing, and adults were instructed in religious affairs.[70] However, this was not unusual since most Egyptian villages had this kind of traditional institution. What was peculiar was that many locals from various families became *sheikhs*, who were regarded by local people as scholars.[71] This is one of the reasons

[70] As Lucie Ryzova puts it out: "Religious knowledge taught in the *kuttab* ought to be understood within the context of relative prosperity, as a form of social capital defined by piety. Sending a child to a *kuttab* defined a middling ('respectable') social position marking the family as one that has the means to invest into religiously defined culture". (Ryzova, 2014, p. 107)

[71] This also may explain why the Grand Sennusi chose to reside in Kerdasa for an unknown period, according to a British intelligence report in 1853.(Great Britain. War Office. Intelligence Division, n.d., p. 46). The Sennusi also established a *zawya* (monastery) in the town (De Jong, 1978, p. 151).

that might explain why many families in Kerdasa today have Sheikh as their surname (keep this in mind, we'll need it later).

The title of *Sheikh* was not restricted to those of religious status, but was also a social honorific (Ammar, 2013, pp. 208–209). This suggests that in villages like Kerdasa, the acquisition of social and cultural capital was possible for a much wider range of people than in the typical village in the remote countryside. Obtaining social and cultural capital later on in royal Egypt was also possible, since many were able to receive an Azhari education or a modern one, and were able to work in the public sector in the city, which was also considered prestigious. However, because 'local politics', in a developed form, was not yet possible, such cultural, social and economic capital could not yet be converted into political capital. This conversion would only become possible with the creation of local politics as a political field from the late 1970s.

Clan-based political mobilization was also not apparent in late royal Egypt, or in the Nasser and Sadat eras. As we saw in Chapter 1, Mahmoud Fahmi Mikkawi was not elected to parliament because of his family, but due to his relations with the palace and his title as a pasha. However, he was also European-educated and was able to draw on his personal resources to develop his hometown and create interest-based alliances. In fact, we know from contemporary Mikkawis that Mahmoud Fahmi was often criticized by his extended family for wasting his resources on building a symbolic legacy. In short, Mahmoud Fahmi was behaving as a pasha by the standards of his time. He was a man driven by concern for

his ‘nobility’,[72] which meant in part by the cultural values of the old upper class that focused on legacy at the expense of wealth.[73] The pasha was expected to have generous manners and to be remembered for his endowments to *waqf* and local communities. The pasha should behave as a pasha and he should pay for this. In Bourdieu’s terms, Mahmood Pasha was buying symbolic capital with economic capital.

In the Nasser period, there is also no evidence that clan-based political mobilization was significant in Kerdasa. As we saw in Chapter 3, the town was raided and punished by the Nasser’s security and military apparatuses in 1965. According to Omar Ashour, these operations belonged to a larger campaign, which aimed to “intimidate the population” through a “massive crackdown that included public flagellation and other forms of torture for suspected MB sympathizers” (Ashour, 2009, p. 84). In Kerdasa, the mechanisms of

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[72] The Pashas’ code of morality was observed by Cromer, who compared them to the European nobility. See: (Cromer, 1908, pp. 222–225).

[73] Galal Amin argues that prior to the July 1952 Revolution the old upper class (which mainly consisted of landowners) did not hate the classes beneath them because they were not afraid of them. The principles of hierarchization in royal Egypt were established and inherited in such a way that it was not imaginable by both rich and poor that they might exchange positions in any circumstances. In Amin’s words, social mobility was highly limited. This social structure over time created a system of values and a form of morality among the old upper class that downplayed economic status and extolled personal legacy. After the revolution, and with the fragmentation of landownership, social mobility was unleashed, and it became imaginable for the classes to exchange positions. Hence, a new system of values emerged whereby hatred did become evident between the new classes. (Amin, 2001)

collective punishment were almost applied equally throughout all groups; there was no discrimination. All were subjected to torture, including the *umda* himself.

For the late Sadat and early Mubarak period, we have a survey conducted between late 1978 and 1980 that indicates how positions in the Local Council were distributed. Those elected (i.e. Kerdasians) were twelve members from eleven families (Hefny, 1983, p. 55). The head of the Local Council was Mahmood Fahmi Mikkawi (Ibid.), who in addition to his impressive legacy in the town, was also a figurehead in the ASU on the national level. Hence, there is no reason to assume that the then-Local Council was based on clan-based distribution. Nevertheless, as was mentioned in Chapter 2, a few elected members seemed to be taking the new local council seriously in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Clannism in the modern political sphere, however, began to become evident from the mid-1980s. Following the creation of local politics as a political field, and the intense competition for local positions among newly empowered lesser notables, people in Cairo's peri-urban fringe became familiar with kin-based mobilization, in which local agents made efforts to cultivate the grassroots through their kinship networks. However, as the following sections will show, clannism was accompanied by a tendency to politicize social spaces, as a strategy to claim a 'genuine' history in the town. In Kerdasa, people experienced a new division that had never existed before in political practice, one that articulated lived spaces with clannism. Many members of the Omar family started to emphasize a division between *bahri* (lit. 'sea', but here meaning 'towards the sea') and *qibili* ('towards the desert'). *Bahri* is the western side of the old town, where the Omars have historically lived, while the eastern side (*qibili*) has been historically the home of the Mikkawis. However, this division has become

anachronistic due to the town's expansion, in which the movement of people has blurred any imagined borders.[74]

The Mikkawis, however, were not interested in playing this game. Firstly, because they were a minority. Many of them had moved to other parts of the country for their own reasons, one of which that they were losing their attachment to the town, especially after the selling of their land by Mahmood Fahmi Mikkawi (it is no wonder that Mahmood Fahmi was retrospectively criticized by his relatives). The logic of the landownership economy in the royal era was not to think of investing in another sector of Kerdasa as many families had done (Mo'ataz Mikkawi, Interview). Secondly and most importantly, they did not feel that clannism would be useful to them. Despite the legacy earned by Mahmood Fahmi, the history of the Mikkawi family was not perceived by many locals as a glorious one, but rather as a history of exploitation and repression, especially after the July 1952 Revolution, which built its legitimacy on the stigmatization of the old rural elites.

In fact, many Kerdasians to this day circulate stories of the cruel way that Mikkawis in the royal era treated many *fellahin* (it might be why many Mikkawis had left their hometown). These stories were frequently invoked, but were extensively recounted during two main periods. The first was the early twentieth century, when new families who had been socio-

[74] It may be confusing but in many other towns in Egypt, *bahri* refers to the north, to the Mediterranean Sea, while *qibili* refers to the south (Upper Egypt). This could also be applicable to Kerdasa, but after the construction of the Aswan High Dam, Kerdasians started to use *bahri* to refer to the new land along the Nile that had become inhabitable. This allowed the expansion of the town to the east, which also increased the opportunity for many families to own plots of land.

economically impoverished and exploited in the previous century were able to climb the social ladder to become peers to many of the Mikkawis, leading to small disputes in which the history of the Mikkawis' exploitation of the people when in power was often stated publicly (see Chapter 1). The second period was the 1980s, when many of the Omars sought to draw on clannism, claiming a brave history of confronting the Mikkawis, as will be discussed in the following section.

Ironically, the Mikkawis, the only family with an actual history of a connected and settled lineage in Kerdasa, at least from the early nineteenth century, had no interest in claiming their 'originality' to the town in the 1980s. Their past was not helpful. In the 1980s, none of the Mikkawis thought to use clannism as a strategy to compete over the political field, while other figures from other families, who *ex nihilo* created 'imagined' lineages, extensively utilized it in the battle for representation. This suggests that, within Kerdassa, clannism has only ever functioned successfully in ideological terms, often by reference to an imaginary, fictional past. A "real" history of clannism would function the same way. Clannism is here contingent on a past which predates the clans; 'clans' and 'clannism' serve to contradict each other historically. This is, however, an abstract argument. What is less abstract is that clannism must be dissociated from the idea of actual clans to be understood. Clannism is a modern strategy that emerges in a specific period when social agents (individuals or groups), in the context of their struggle over the political field, recall imagined clans or an imagined history of kin-based solidarities. The following section will demonstrate this phenomenon, with a focus on two examples in Kerdasa: the Omars and the Sheikhs.

4.2.1.1 The Omars

Yousef Abdel-Salam Saleh, the central figure among the Omars in the 1980s, has appeared twice before in this study. In Chapter 2, we saw how he represented the ASU veterans, who were faced from the mid-1980s by a new generation of NDP men who stood for a new trend in local politics, one that was influenced by neighbourhoodism. He also appeared in Chapter 3, offering protection for the mosque movement, and enabling to them hold activities in Kerdasa. In this section we will examine how he became the most respected figure in the Omar *a'aila*. He has become retrospectively regarded by many Omars as the person who has most represented their claims, in an established political role, in the whole history of Kerdasa.

The rise of the 'actual' Yousef Abdel-Salam, however, could be attributed to a broader historical process that took place in Cairo's outskirts. This was due to the social rise of many local notables in the post-1952 era generally in Egypt, but in Cairo's outskirts it was also due to the relative prosperity that had emerged prior to that, as we have seen, which increased the opportunity for many locals to be educated and to work in the public sector, thus obtaining social, cultural and economic capital. In Kerdasa, many families were able from the early twentieth century to buy plots of lands from the Mikkawis. These were, as we have noted, mainly used for growing date palms and vegetables to accommodate the needs of Cairo. Abdel-Salam, Yousef's father, was at the head of one of those families. Yousef Abdel-Salam was born in 1929. According to his son, in the 1950s he was able to diversify his business, at a time when he worked in the construction sector, and in the 1960s held a position within the local unit in Kerdasa (Mustafa Abdel-Salam, Interview). Yousef was also a member in the ASU in the 1950s and 1960s (Ibid.). He was one of the village youths who

was selected on behalf of the *fellahin* when Nasserist policies were oriented towards benefitting and mobilizing small landowners.[75]

By the 1970s, Yousef had become one of the most respected figures in the town. By the early 1980s, he had become the local GS of the NDP, the head of the town's sport club, and the second person to be elected as the head of the Local Council after Mahmoud Fahmi Mikkawi (Various Interviews). However, the role played by Yousef in his locality might be categorized as that which any 'mediator' might be expected to perform. Local politics in this time was not yet developed enough to allow him to progress beyond this role. Hence, from the 1970s, Yousef became known as Sheikh Yousef. The title of 'Sheikh', in this context, did not refer to a religious status, but rather to *Sheikh al-Arab*, a person who was trusted in his locality to act as a mediator. Such a person was eligible to set up reconciliation councils (*majalis al-sulh* or *majalis al-arab*), and to resolve disputes and hostilities between townspeople and sometimes members of the same family. Most disputes were over money, such as the distribution of inheritance (especially land), or settlements between partners in a workshop. Sheikh Yousef also at times solved problems relating to crimes such as fights between families, robberies, and even homicide (Ibid.).

Traditional courts and customary law (*'urf*) are still widespread in both Upper and Lower Egypt, and in most cases informally acknowledged by the formal authorities. Many accounts have considered this to be an indicator of the communal tendency to keep the state out of local affairs (Dupret et al., 1999). In this matter, the state is considered an 'outsider', which does not have the necessary experience to solve local problems (Nielsen, 2006). In his

[75] On Nasser's policies with respect to the mobilization of small and medium peasants, see: (Harik, 1974)

ethnographic account of the district of Idfu in Upper Egypt, Nielsen has argued that customary law reflects "the predominance of the oral over the written in legal matters under Islamic jurisprudence." (Nielsen, 1998, p. 359). This is despite the fact that the Qur'an and Islamic Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) explicitly stipulate the necessity of writing down debts and contracts. Nevertheless, Nielsen also points to other reasons that lie behind customary law, such as the local tendency to emulate official administrative procedures. This was facilitated by the slow procedures that mar the Egyptian legal system, which delays work on cases that need to be settled urgently before they escalate into large-scale feuds between two or more families. However, Nielsen observed that many people who might choose to go to the *majlis al-sulh* to handle some cases might also prefer to stand before an official court in other cases (Mahgoub, 2015, p. 28).

In this sense, local notables such as Sheikh Yousef were expected by their communities to apply customary law. And as Sheikh Yousef, in the 1970s, was a figurehead in the local ASU, it can also be concluded that this is what the state expected him to do. However, after the evolution of the SLA and the development of the political field, the application of *'urf* has become just one role among several played by local figureheads. From the mid-1980s, their role was fundamentally transformed as Chapter 2 showed, and they assumed functions that had previously been considered above their predecessors' station. This did not mean that customary law disappeared, but rather that many 'respected people' became eligible for the role especially after the rise of mosque movement, which also produced locally renowned personalities, as we saw in Chapter 3. In 1991, Sheikh Yousef died in a car accident while travelling from Egypt to Libya, after he had lost the presidency of the Local Council to Mohammad Abdel Wahhab. The death was a shock for the people of Kerdasa. As a result,

members of the Kerdasa Sports Club decided to name a new football stadium in the town after him (Various Interviews).

As can be observed, Sheikh Yousef did not obtain his status from his family. Neither did he need a kin-based mobilization to gain his townspeople's respect. We know, furthermore, that his relations with Mahmood Fahmi Mikkawi were very good. They not only worked together in the Local Council, but Sheikh Yousef was also elected chairman of the local sports club that had been established by Mahmood Fahmi. Yousef achieved his legacy perhaps because he was a self-made man, perhaps due to his history in the ASU, or his charisma, or perhaps all of these together – but his social capital could not be attributed to his family, which he did not need. However, Sheikh Yousef would be portrayed after his death by many of his siblings as Yousef Abdel-Salam Saleh-Omar.

Prior to this time, the Kerdasians did not use the name of *a'ailah* (clan) to identify a person, but rather just the branch name. This is probably because most people who belonged to small and medium-size families did not know their clans' names or did not care to know. On the other hand, those who came from relatively old and established kinships and knew their clan names were not in the habit of using them. This is because it was quite odd for people to identify themselves with three middle names instead of two. Furthermore, the government system for identity cards requires just four names and the vast majority of formal transactions that require forms do not have room for a fifth.

It is worth mentioning, nevertheless, that there had been an earlier tendency that led people, from the early twentieth century at least, to avoid using their clan names. In communities that were trade-based, many people were keen to be identified by names deriving from their

occupation or social status, rather than to be affiliated with a group of hundreds who shared nothing beyond kinship relations. For example, Ghizlani is a family name in Kerdasa, which is a branch of the Omar *a'aila*.[76] Ghizlani literally means 'weaver', therefore, it is probable that it referred to a famous weaver(s) from the Omar family who later became known by his occupation. The Ghizlani family today consists of hundreds of members, a few of whom really do stress their descent from the Omars.

The tendency to emphasize clan affiliation began in the mid-1980s. This was again due to the intense competition in the local political field after the region witnessed a 'glut' of empowered lesser notables. Clannism, therefore, emerged as a strategy that could be used by local social agents to utilize the potential grassroots that might be mobilized. In Kerdasa, one of its most important impacts was on local terminology, as many townspeople from the late 1980s started to use the name of their *a'ailah* as a surname (*a'ailah* literally means family but actually refers to a clan that compromises many families). Prior to that, the common term locally used had been *dar* (plural *dur*), which literally means household but locally refers to the branch. For instance, as we have seen, both the Saleh and Ghizlani families are branches of the Omar clan. While, prior to the mid-1980s, local people had

[76] The Omars believe that their clan are descendants of the tribe of A'amar in the Arab peninsula from the 1500s. They came to Kerdasa and established two mosques in Darb Omar (now al-Haswaya), one of them being the Qasim Mosque, which is currently in the centre of town. According to them, the Omars were Islamic scholars (uluma) who established a religious centre that later evolved to become Kerdasa. Different Interviews conducted in May 2016. The Omar clan consists of seven families: the Saleh, al-Ghizlani, al-Jamal, Abu-Ghrara, Abu-Zak, al-Asa'al and al-Sayfi.

referred to themselves separately as *dar* Saleh and *dar* Ghizlani, from the late 1980s it became not uncommon to attribute members of both families to *a'ailat* Omar.

Thus, in the 1990s, Sheikh Yousef's legacy was represented by many of the Omars as belonging to their legacy as a whole clan. Stories of the Omars' history in confronting the Mikkawis' repressive measures in the royal era were extensively circulated among the new generation of the Omars. Not only did this strategy aim to draw up an overall historical narrative of the clan that integrated the stories of small disputes from the royal era,[77] but it also involved a form of symbolic violence against potential competitors in the Mikkawi family. The latter could not in turn use clannism as a strategy, for the reasons discussed in the previous section. It is also important to stress that this version of clannism was, in its essence, influenced by neighbourhoodism, whereby it was tangled up with claims over the 'originality' of social spaces.

For example, it was claimed that al-Haswaya, a neighborhood on the *bahri* side of the old town, was the original centre of Kerdasa. This was the neighborhood in which the Omars had historically lived and worked. It possessed a mosque and a *kuttab*, both bearing the name 'Qasim'. In the royal era the *kuttab* became a guest house of the same name (*madafit* Qasim), probably as the role of *kuttab* had declined with the spread of modern education. Next to al-Haswaya is al-Tahuna, which used to be a house that hosted social gatherings of the Omars.

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[77] I managed to interview a few elderlies from Kerdasa who confirmed that during their life they witnessed many disputes between the Mikkawis and the Omars, but all of these disputes were small and did not evolve to become large-scale disputes between two families. (Ismail Abu Hussain, Interview; Aysha Ghizlani, Interview).

Tahuna literally means ‘mill’, and therefore one can assume that it was originally a building in which grains were milled, before the government subsidized the selling and distribution of bread. However, in the 1990s, al-Tahuna was portrayed as though it had been among the socio-political headquarters of the Omars, in contrast to Duwwar al-Mikkawi, where the *umdas* lived and carried out their work.[78] Lastly, it was also claimed that Sheikh Yousef-Abdel Salam Saleh-Omar was the founder of Kerdasa’s sport club. This claim was made despite the fact that inside one of the halls of the club there is a marble plaque engraved with a commemoration of the club’s establishment by Mahmoud Fahmi Mikkawi in 1967.

Was it worth it? After more than two decades, there is no way to determine this precisely. Nevertheless, we know that in 1994 Ibrahim Hussain Saleh-Omar was elected as Head of the Local Council and Abdel-Aziz Saleh-Omar was elected as Chairman of the Club of Kerdasa. Both men had played no role in the political field prior to that (Mahjoub, Interview). Was the claim driven solely by politics? This, however, was only one of its motivations. The process of self-identification is too complex to be only explained by localism, as will be discussed in the next section. However, although clannism might bring benefits for social agents, it might also cause them problems, especially when one member or more of the family is involved in activities that are considered by the security agencies to be a threat. In this case, the typical response from the bifurcated state is to consider most of those who belong to the family or its friends as suspicious persons who should be denied any access to the most representative positions. This occasionally happened from the mid-1990s, when members of the Ghizlani family were arrested for being members of the Jihad

[78] Information about Tahuna and al-Huswaya derived from many interviews with members from the Omars.

Organization. Therefore, the SSIS started to become suspicious of the Omars. In 2000, the Egyptian security agencies excluded Ibrahim Hussain Saleh from running in the mid-term elections for the Local Council, most likely because a competitor had informed the SSIS about possible relations between him and the MB. A few years later, Abdel Aziz Saleh was prevented from participating in the Kerdasa Sport Club elections because his son was suspected of being a supporter of the MB. However, this could also be attributed to the growing decision-making role played by the Egyptian security agencies from 2005 to 2011, with the aim of creating a new political atmosphere that might help to groom Gamal Mubarak as his father's successor as president of Egypt as will be discussed next chapter.

Hence, as can be seen in the case of the Omars, clannism in Cairo's peri-urban fringe cannot be understood without an awareness of its relationship to the social space. In essence, it is an attempt to merge the history of the town with the imagined history of the imagined clan. This is what sometimes made it effective, as it allows local agents to expand their support beyond consanguineous and affinal relations, thus expanding their influence and political-economic scope. It allows them to claim that they are not only representing their 'clans', but also the whole town, its amenities and its cultural and economic institutions. This is why this study has argued that clannism in Cairo's peri-urban fringe was also influenced by neighbourhoodism, in which social agents worked to prove their genuine representation of the social space.

4.2.1.2 The Sheikhs

The story of the al-Sheikh *a'ailah* can be attributed entirely to one person in Kerdasa: Mohammad Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub. Mahjoub appeared in Chapter 2 as the representative

of a new generation of the NDP figureheads, who arrived with a new model of local politics that was influenced by neighbourhoodism. In Chapter 3, we saw how he was considered by many Islamists to be a monitor of their activities for the police, representing a fundamental transformation in the attitude of NDP men towards them. In this section, we will consider him in his role as head of the al-Sheikh *a'ailah* and its sole public representative, according to many of the Sheikhs. This is because he was the only person to narrate their story.

We do not know much about the history of the Sheikh family prior to the 1980s. In fact, all my interviewees from this family referred me to Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub for information concerning their history. We know from different sources, however, that the *dar* of Mahjoub shared extensive affinal relations with the Mikkawis, at least from the royal era. Mahjoub himself, said that he was an assistant to Mahmoud Fahmi Mikkawi and was almost 'adopted' by Nazmi Rashid Mikkawi (the last *umda* in Kerdasa), who supported him when he ran for, and subsequently won the presidency of the Local Council in 1984 (Mahjoub, Interview). As we saw in Chapter 2, Mahjoub's work was impressive. He introduced a new model of public service that went far beyond the traditional role of mediation, as exemplified by his predecessor (Sheikh Yousef). His office in the Local Council was said to resemble a beehive in its whirl of activity (Ibid.).

Mahjoub was also a steely-eyed man but somewhat rash. He was aware, from the late 1980s, of the advantages of clannism. Therefore, he drew on his relations to issue an identity card that bore 'Mikkawi' as his fifth name (*laqab*), which he also believed to be genuinely the case. Thus, he became for a while, Ahmed Mohammad Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub al-Mikkawi. He probably thought that being a Mikkawi would improve his chances in the competition for success in the political field. However, the new generation of Mikkawis did

not recognize him. They were not interested in playing this game as the Mikkawi clan had acquired a bad reputation, as we have seen. In fact, most Mikkawis were unwilling to revive their family status as they knew this would not be in their interest. Clannism for the Mikkawis, therefore, was anachronistic. But for Mahjoub, the rejection provoked an existential crisis. He called it a *fitna* (sedition).

In my interview with Mahjoub, he insisted that until the mid-1980s, both the Mikkawis and the Sheikhs were one *a'aila*. The person who first established Kerdasa, he said, was Abdel-Rahman al-Sheikh, who belonged to the dynasty of Oqba Ben Nafea' (one of the Prophet Mohammad's companions). Abdel-Rahman al-Sheikh, according to Mahjoub, was the father of thirty-three branches, which became the first community in Kerdasa. As a result, he said, even the Mikkawis themselves are a branch of al-Sheikh, and he called both Mahmoud Fahmi Mikkawi and Nazmi Rashid Mikkawi his uncles (Ibid.). Nevertheless, anyone in Mahjoub's position can be theoretically correct in such claims. Due to the fact that a great number of Kerdasa's families are intertwined and interrelated by marriage over decades, it is not difficult to find a mutual origin that connects several families together as a new reference point.[79]

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[79] It was long ago established that patrilineal endogamy in the Middle East has rarely been more than an idiom for marrying close and has not been purely based on blood relations (i.e. marrying exclusively from the father's bloodline). In this case, the kinship pattern has always been prone to fissure, resulting in a situation in which everyone has multiple ways of reckoning kinship to everyone else in the group. (Murphy and Kasdan, 1959). I am grateful to Professor Walter Armbrust for drawing my attention to this article. The same conclusion can also be drawn with respect to the evolution of tribes and clans in rural and urban settings. Many scholars in the Middle East have stressed that tribes or clans are fluid and hence difficult to conceptualize structurally. They

After what was described by him as *fitna*, Mahjoub had to find his own path to construct a new version of clannism. He managed to form a new ‘coalition’ of families under the name of the Sheikhs, or as one of the Mikkawis has described it, “the confederation of al-Sheikh” (M. M, Interview). By combining five medium-size families (the Mahjoub, Babah, al-Saber, Haidar, and Abu-Taleb), along with other smaller families that have had extensive mutual marriages and affinal relations, he has become the head of one of the largest (and newest) *a’ailat* in Kerdasa. This was possible because many families in Kerdasa could add ‘al-Sheikh’ after their surnames to become the fifth element.

As we saw in Section 4.2.1, since many families from the late nineteenth century were able to send their children to the *kuttab,* the town needed many sheikhs to meet the local demand. The title of Sheikh in the Ottoman period, and in the early Mohammad Ali Pasha’s state, was also given to ‘Chiefs of Crafts’ (*hiraf*, sing. *hirfa*). The Chief of Craft was the man who carried out the register’s orders and “summoned the guild notables to set prices of purchase and of sale to the public” (Ghazaleh, 2005, p. 243). Therefore, many families through the nineteenth and the early twentieth century might have temporarily held ‘Sheikh’ as a surname before they settled on a new one when their lineage was extended, and at a time when people tended to be more specific in identifying themselves (Khaled Abbad, Interview).

It is also worth mentioning that once clannism became pervasive, it tended to create the feeling that everyone should affiliate themselves with a clan. This is one of the hallmarks of

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expand and shrink, include and exclude, as they are redefined constantly by social actors. On this issue, see: (al-Ahmar, 2016).

the modern age, which has seen a tendency for people to overthink their origins.[80] Hence, in this period, Mahjoub was perhaps proposing a satisfying answer not only for many people, but also for himself. One can also conclude that Mahjoub was not only driven by politics, but also by the need to locate himself and his lineage within a narrative. Hence, Mahjoub was to become Ahmed Mohammad Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub al-Sheikh.

Even so, it was not so easy to build up a new 'clan' in this relatively modern period. Though many people accepted the new clan, there were also many who did not, while the vast majority did not care enough to investigate its factual veracity, and therefore let it go.[81] Nevertheless, Mahjoub persisted in his strategy of constructing a legacy for the Sheikhs, and articulated this with the social space. From his position as the Head of the Local Council, he is said to have utilized his connections with the governorate in order to change the name of a street in the town centre to 'al-Sheikh Street'. He also named a mosque in the street after his 'clan', claiming that these had been their original names for hundreds of years. Mahjoub also claimed that even the Mikkawi Duwwar, which was the location of the *umda's* headquarters, had been known in the past as the 'Duwwar of Sheikh', before the Mikkawis changed its name (Different Interviews). Again, neighbourhoodism was the driving force.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Mahjoub contributed to the development of his locality during his term of office. By manoeuvring among various local state institutions in the SLA,

[80] This is also applicable to nationalism and sectarianism. See: (Anderson, 1991). On sectarianism see: (Bishara, 2018).

[81] To this day, many Kerdasians still question the claimed history of the Sheikhs. Even some of the Sheikhs themselves tell the story with some hesitancy.

through his connections with the NDP's business circles, and by his employment of clannism to mobilize the grassroots, Mahjoub led many initiatives that were real achievements (*injazat*) for Kerdasa. Furthermore, Mahjoub belonged to a new generation of the NDP, who alienated their predecessors (the ASU veterans) by introducing a new model of public service influenced by the conditions of their era. This was demonstrated by Sheikh Yousef Abdel-Salam Saleh, who in 1989 resigned from his position as the NDP's local GS, after Mahjoub had bypassed him by submitting an informal electoral list for the Local Council in the name of the ruling party through back channels. Mahjoub won the battle, but not without a resistance from Sheikh Yousef. Before reaching the end of his life, Sheikh Yousef had been able metaphorically to slap his rival in the face.

The dispute between Abdel-Salam Saleh and Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub, as described in this chapter's introduction, reveals one aspect of this struggle. Sheikh Yousef was able to force the Giza governorate to issue an order to remove any constructions that had been built on the land of Kerdasa's cemeteries. The havoc that accompanied this case was a source of mental pain for Mahjoub, especially after the death of Sheikh Yousef and the eulogizing of him that followed. He was on the verge of quitting politics when he was placated by the governor, who selected him to work in the Governorate of al-Giza's Administration, which led him to leave the Local Council and later return to the town as the local GS of the NDP (Mahjoub, Interview). Ever since, he has been one of the most important pillars of the NDP in Kerdasa, consequently learning a great deal about electoral politics, especially after the 1995 parliamentary elections, when he worked extensively to mobilize backing for the NDP's candidates (Ibid.) (here clientelism research is applicable).

Eventually, Mahjoub sought to take a further step, drawing on years of hard work by running for Kerdasa in the 2000 parliamentary elections. However, the Egyptian regime sought to block access to all voting stations in which the MB might do well. Kerdasa's station was one of these, in which Tariq Zaki Mikkawi was running for election on behalf of the Brotherhood. On the day of the election, Mahjoub went to the voting station to protest against the police, where he was physically assaulted by a security officer. As a result, both Mahjoub and Tariq lost the election, leaving the seat to Khaled Taye'a, an NDP figurehead from the town of Abu Rawash. Although the police had illegally closed Kerdasa's voting station, Mahjoub claimed that he had managed to win more than 2000 votes (Ibid.).

This is a case in which the regime's proxies not only suppressed its ideological opponents, but also someone who was supposedly a client of the regime, according to neopatrimonialism theory. The case of Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub, however, shows that social dynamics are more complex than the relations acknowledged by this theory. His case should be situated in a broader complex context in which the Egyptian regime from the late 1990s had started to lose control over the continuous rise of empowered lesser notables motivated by neighbourhoodism. As we saw in Chapter 2, Egyptian authoritarianism was able to coopt them in the SLA and the NDP in the 1980s and early 1990s. However, with the rise of successive waves of such notables, the authoritarian regime's ability to adapt to them was limited.

The state's response, however, was not to broaden democratic measures and allow political organizations to work formally on the ground. On the contrary, the state tried to uproot and suppress most political movements that were not under the regime's control, as we saw in Chapter 3. As a result, the NDP from the early 1990s became a *de facto* totalitarian entity

that captured all formal means of socio-political mobilization. Nevertheless, the NDP was to move into another crisis when, over time, it lost its ability to contain the empowered lesser notables once they became too large in number. The bifurcated state tried once more to adapt by creating semi-democratic procedures inside the NDP that obliged NDP men to compete among each other and which allowed the strongest candidates, who were more likely to represent their localities, to win local positions. In this context, clannism was born. It was a means of social mobilization by which social agents at the local level had the opportunity to maintain grassroots support and to safeguard their position in the political field, in a context in which there was no other way to achieve this.

For Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub, his failure to win a seat in the 2000 elections was not, however, the end of his political career. As we saw in Chapter 2, he continued after this to secure his position in the political field. In 2003, when the NDP was about to exclude him from the local GS, he used his influence to force the NDP to divide the position of party secretary of Kerdasa into two secretaries. Henceforth, he had his 'own' secretary. His political career, however, would end a year later when the rules of the game were changed and new 'players' imposed by a political decision came to dominate the political field. He was confronted with new 'arrivals' who lacked any rootedness in their communities, but brought money with them instead and the support of the SSIS. In 2004, Ahmad Mohammad Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub al-Sheikh went into social isolation under the pretext of being unwell and after recovering, he quit politics.

Conclusion: Why Clannism?

From the late 1980s to the early 2000s, clannism in Cairo's peri-urban fringe was widely employed by the NDP's men as a strategy to defend and improve their positions inside the political field. This chapter has examined the historical context that led local social agents to pursue kin-based mobilizations in their competition for local positions. In first part of this chapter, it was argued that Cairo's outskirts in the 1980s witnessed the rise of two waves of empowered lesser notables, leading to an intense competition for power in local politics. This development prompted social agents to create clannism *ex nihilo* through the invocation of imagined clans. However, as the second part of the chapter argued, clannism cannot be understood without seeing how it has been shaped and influenced by neighbourhoodism. In Kerdasa, social agents used clannism to claim their rootedness in the town and their entitlement therefore to represent their social space. This is why clannism was not, in essence, trying to claim the history of a lineage, but rather to claim the history of social spaces.

What made local agents in Kerdasa employ clannism as a strategy of mobilization in the first place? They did so because they had tried to participate in politics in other formal and informal ways, but had failed. As we discussed in Chapter 3, Cairo's peri-urban fringe in the 1980s witnessed different forms of political mobilization that were eventually suppressed by the regime from the late 1980s. Mohammad Sayed Ghizlani in 1979 was assaulted when he decided to run in the parliamentary elections on the Wafd list. The mosque movement was also subjected to repressive measures and eventually alienated in the late 1990s. The 1990s also witnessed a large security campaign that targeted most Islamists under the pre-text of uprooting Jihadists after the latter tried to impose themselves in the political field.

Kerdasians say that since that time, the SSIS has become involved in almost all aspects of their lives. Hence, the NDP emerged as a *de facto* totalitarian entity, capturing all means of local mobilization.

Clannism is a manoeuvring strategy that helped local compacts to appear ‘neutral’ and ‘natural’ in an authoritarian setting. Since clannism claims to be based on blood relations, it helps social agents and advancing elites to practise politics and to cultivate connections with power centres without coming under suspicion of being affiliated with opposition movements. Clannism was also an efficient way to convince the authoritarian rulers that local agents genuinely represented their local communities. But at the same time, it was also a real strategy of social mobilization, involving narratives that engaged with people’s questions of identity, thus, belonged to the larger process of self-identification that has been a characteristic of the modern age.

The role of clannism was to become less important in the second half of the 2000s. This was because the regime changed the rules of game after the rise of Gamal Mubarak. The NDP informally abandoned its semi-democratic procedures, turning its back on Mahjoub’s generation. From the mid-2000s, a new wave of NDP rivals came to replace the NDP veterans, who had been more rooted and established in their localities. The new NDP men, by contrast, had little knowledge of their localities; they came only with money. It was a reckless mistake strategically – for which the Egyptian regime would pay dearly in January 2011.

5

NEIGHBOURHOODISM WITH CLAWS:

THE CLASHES BETWEEN THE BIFURCATED STATE AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN CAIRO'S PERI-URBAN FRINGE

On 14 August 2013, a massacre at the police station in Kerdasa took place. A group of armed and masked assailants attacked the police station firing bullets and rocket-propelled grenades. They killed 11 police officers in revenge for the breakup of the Rabia al-Adawiya sit-in, a huge protest camp that had been set up by the MB against the military coup and removal of the elected president Mohammad Morsi. Over the following 35 days, the Egyptian press and satellite TV channels produced dozens of reports on the criminality of the people of Kerdasa, accusing them of dealing in arms, committing acts of terrorism, and supporting armed groups. In response, many of the families and activists there tried to deny any connection between Kerdasa and the attackers, claiming that 'unknown people' from other towns had committed the massacre.

At dawn on Thursday, 19 September 2013, the operation to storm Kerdasa began. It was broadcast live on television by Egyptian channels in a carnivalesque atmosphere. Tanks and armoured cars surrounded Kerdasa. Over the course of a few hours, thousands of rounds of live ammunition and tear gas canisters were fired. Throughout the day and into the night dozens of homes were raided, their contents smashed and their inhabitants, be they men,

women or juveniles, arrested in a humiliating manner. The following day, after Friday prayers, a large number of townspeople came out to condemn the raids. The police and army stationed in the town responded with gunfire and tear gas, leading to the asphyxiation of a number of children.[82]

The media, purged of any semblance of independence, behaved as though the Egyptian Army were going to war, rather than targeting a group of citizens for arrest, and inflaming public opinion with imaginary victories over "enemies" who were most likely innocent. For a week, the homes of respectable local personalities, many of whom were Islamists, were attacked. Videos began circulating of burnt-out homes and the damage caused by the security forces. Anything that could be stolen was taken and the remaining possessions of these households trashed. Hundreds of townspeople of various political affiliations were arrested. According to many Kerdasians, the value of stolen cash and jewelry was estimated to be in the region of hundreds of thousands of Egyptian pounds.

Why did all this happen? Based on the theoretical model proposed in the previous chapters, this chapter is an attempt to understand the underlying logic behind the post-military coup violence in Kerdasa. The August 2013 clashes in Kerdasa appeared to be a part of a broader wave of political violence that pervaded many Egyptian cities after the overthrow of Mohammad Morsi in July 2013, and the August 2013 Rabeaa massacre. Thus, the violence has been interpreted as an expression of the struggle between the MB and the deep state. However, this chapter will show that these incidents were also locally driven. They were the

[82] For a full documentation of these incidents, see Section 5.3 of this chapter.

expression of a moment in which authoritarianism totally lost control over neighbourhoodism.

Nevertheless, a comprehensive explanation for the August clashes may also require a return to the few years preceding the revolution, when the Egyptian bifurcated state terminated its connections with what was supposed to be its grassroots: the local NDP. Hence, when the January 25 Revolution erupted in Kerdasa, the regime's institutions found no local allies on the ground to offer assistance. Furthermore, this chapter will trace the emergence of forms of self-administration in Kerdasa, which resulted from the withdrawal of the state's security agencies from the city after the limited clashes that took place in January 28, 2011 (the Friday of Rage), and will explore the evolution of the relationship between Kerdasa's Popular Committee (PC) (*lajna sha'bya)* and the state's local institutions. While popular committees in many Egyptian cities had been formed spontaneously to protect neighbourhoods from crime and acts of *baltaja* following the withdrawal of the police, Kerdasa's PC would later evolve to perceive itself as a representative entity that replaced the role played by the local NDP in the political field after the later was politically delegitimized by the revolution.

5.1 On the Eve of a Revolution: The Rule of the SSIS and Baltajiya

The previous chapters of this study proposed that a line be drawn between two generations of the NDP. The first of these two generations began to decline from the mid-1980s. It consisted of ASU veterans whose roles were mainly restricted to mediating between people in their localities. This generation was replaced by a new one that emerged in tandem with the consolidation of neighbourhoodism as a dominant habitus of the political field, which entailed the evolution of the SLA. We refer to this generation as the local NDP veterans. The

previous chapter also concluded by stating that the local NDP veterans, who were motivated by neighbourhoodism, were later replaced by parachuted 'arrivals', who came with the rise of Gamal Mubarak and what has been known in Egypt as the 'money-power marriage'. By the late 2000s, it had become apparent among the NDP grassroots, in Cairo's peri-urban fringe, that the regime had turned its back on them.

Nonetheless, it is important to shed some light on what was going on within the local NDP on the eve of that development. Local NDP veterans in Kerdasa have stated that in the early 2000s, a new procedure was introduced that permitted the creation of new secretaries at the local level (Mahjoub, Interview; Hasanin Mikkawi, Interview; Abu Ismail, Interview; Gabiri, Interview). It became possible for any NDP member to apply to establish a new local secretary if he managed to collect two hundred letters of attorney (*tawkilat*) from registered NDP members, while the national NDP Secretary became more flexible in approving these applications (Ibid.). As a consequence, it became not unusual to have more than one local secretary in one town. In Ausim there were four, while in Kerdasa, Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub managed to have his own secretary. Furthermore, the NDP veterans have stated that in 2003 a new system was developed to select the ruling party's candidates for parliament and the local councils. Thus, the NDP members were secretly to vote in the local Electoral College (*mujama' intikhabi*) to choose the party's formal nominees (Ibid.).

Chapters 2 and 3 suggested that we can view these developments as adaptive mechanisms to manage the competition that ensued among the rising NDP men when they became too abundant in number. Thus, these developments reflected a crisis in which the ruling party's existing structure could no longer contain socio-political mobilization at the local level, and it had to choose the strongest NDP candidate. Local NDP veterans have stated that the

system of the local Electoral College was respected by the upper level of the ruling party at one time, prior to the 2005 elections (Ibid.). In the 2010 elections, however, the local figureheads of the NDP enthusiastically mobilized their grassroots, mainly by kin-based means, but the results of the primaries were almost totally disregarded by the upper levels. The winners were surprised by a parachuting of formal candidates who had barely appeared in the primaries (Ibid.). In the 2010 primaries, for instance, Ala'a Wali was chosen by the Electoral College, but the NDP nomination eventually went to Khaled Taiea' who had no chance in the primaries, according to Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub (Mahjoub, Ibid.). Wali resisted by running as an independent, but the election's outcome was predetermined in favour of Taiea'.[83] It is no wonder, then, that the number of 'independent' candidates for the 2010 elections was dramatically to rise.

The chaos at the NDP's lower level was explained as an expression of the struggle between the old and new 'guard' at the upper level, which was widely covered by both the Egyptian media and many academic analyses (Brownlee, 2002). Nevertheless, it can also be assumed that in the context of this struggle, a new tendency within the upper level believed that the existing system of containment had been shown to have failed politically. As we discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the system's political outcomes were indeed contradictory. While neighbourhoodism worked efficiently at the micro level (e.g. villages and towns), it failed on the macro level (i.e. districts), where it was defeated by the politics of identity. Thus, it may be possible that there was a tendency in the thinking of the 'new guards' to consider it

[83] The following report reflects on the indignation among the NDP rivals in Kerdasa's district on the day of elections: ("Kerdasa: Indignation, resignations and appeals against the NDP [formal] candidates," 2010)

better to recruit supporters selectively in what was believed to be an efficient ‘modern’ way: through NGOs. For example, Moa’taz Mikkawi was a highly educated youth and a member of the NDP, who in 2007 was chosen by one of Gamal Mubarak’s institutions (the Future Generation Foundation) to become a board member. Within a relatively short period of time, he had acquired further responsibilities in the national Secretariat of the NDP (Mo’ataz Mikkawi, Interview).

Moa’taz stated that one of the local NDP veterans had reported to the SSIS that he was an *ikhwani* member who was trying to infiltrate the NDP with malicious intentions. As a result, Moa’taz was interrogated for hours in the SSIS headquarters in Cairo before he was eventually released. Moa’taz could not understand why the local NDP veteran had made that accusation, especially since he shared no history with him and they belonged to different generations (Ibid.). This story could not be verified, but if true, it might indicate how Gamal Mubarak’s NGOs were conceived as dangerous by the local NDP veterans.

Hence, by the late 2000s, the local NDP veterans found themselves the main victims of the struggle that took place in the upper level. They had to witness their ‘unjust’ replacement by amateurs with no history of public service. Many of them, as Mahjoub had done relatively early, were to quietly give up. Many others resisted, however, and were consequently subjugated and humiliated, mostly by the security apparatuses. But how could the Egyptian authoritarian regime abandon its well-established grassroots in this way? Simply, through reliance on more authoritarian measures.

In Cairo’s peri-urban fringe, the local NDP veterans from the mid-2000s realized that their form of socio-political mobilization had been substituted by a new informal system of local

power in which the SSIS was in charge, and in which *baltajiya* frequently appeared to be on the side of the police.[84] *Baltajiya* had started to become noticeable in Kerdasa from the mid-1990s. Many Kerdasians saw groups of them hanging around the new mixed-gender business school. The school opened in 1994-5 and received students from the surrounding towns and villages. Thus, this semblance of *baltajiya* was associated with the way in which the town was increasingly taking the form of a city. At this time, the *baltajiya* were only small groups of street transgressors. But from 2007, Kerdasians started to notice some of them around the newly established Police Centre, where they chatted with police officers. They were also extensively used in the 2010 elections to block access to voting stations. However, the *baltajiya* are too complex to be considered merely figures exploited by security agents. They deserve a separate analysis.

On the eve of the January revolution, it seemed to most local NDP veterans that the rules of the game had been changed forever. Local social agents could no longer use the same strategies to defend or improve their position in the political field. Most positions had become fully controlled by the SSIS, which rented several apartments in Kerdasa as headquarters. Ironically, while the security intelligence, a few years before, had been oriented towards the NDP's opponents, mainly Islamists, now the local NDP were also targeted. Not only was this mirrored in the general elections, it was also reflected by smaller appointments, such as when both the Local Council (in 2008) and Kerdasa's sport club (in

[84] Cilja Harders has discussed this phenomenon, which she calls "the authoritarian social contract of informality". (Harders et al., 2013). However, she places all the different social agents involved, such as Islamists, *baltajiyas,* the NDP men, businessmen and security forces, in one and the same basket.

2006) became headed by figures who had no history of public service and did not belong to large *a'ailat*. This may be one of the reasons behind the dissolution of the local councils in March 2011 (one month after Mubarak's removal), which were considered, according to a judicial decision, "the foundation of the NDP's power on the basis that they had corrupted the country's political life" (Rutherford, 2013, p. xxvi).

It is no surprise, then, that during the first days of the revolution, the police in Kerdasa found almost no sympathy among those who should theoretically have been their allies. The 2010 elections were the last straw in the detachment of the Egyptian bifurcated state from its previously established grassroots. The Egyptian version of authoritarianism was consuming itself and the heavy levied for this was soon to be paid.

5.2 Filling the Gap: Kerdasa After the Friday of Rage

If there is one day that the Egyptian police will never forget, it must surely be 28 January 2011, later known as the Friday of Rage (*Jum'at al-Ghadab*), when for the first time in Egypt's history the Interior Ministry was literally defeated by hundreds of thousands of angry protestors. Following this event, the security forces 'disappeared' from all the major cities, including Cairo. For most observers then, it was a miracle. This was also how it seemed in Kerdasa when mass demonstrations took place for the first time in the town's history. Thousands of townspeople attacked the police station in the town centre and ejected all the police officers from it, after two protesters (Yousef Anwar Mikkawi and Husam Ahmed Jindi) had been killed by police (Various Interviews). As a result, the townspeople stormed the police station in the town centre, forced the police to evacuate, and then

destroyed it. The police did not return to the town for another eight months, following mediation by PC.

As with many urban quarters and towns in Egypt, the police withdrawal from Kerdasa created a security vacuum. For this reason, local groups organized semi-armed popular committees (*lijan sha'biyya*) to protect their neighbourhoods. In Kerdasa, Sheikh Mohammad Mahdi Ghizlani (see Chapter 4) led the PC, which included more than a hundred young people from different families. The PC, which was driven by the revolutionary spirit, had little difficulty in administering the town during the eighteen days of the revolution until Mubarak stepped down. During the following eight months, which was known in the country as the transitional phase (*marhala intiqaliyya*), the PC refused to allow the police to return without settling the cases of the two victims who had died during the 28 January clashes.

However, while most PCs in Egypt were spontaneously dissolved after the removal of Mubarak, Kerdasa's PC in fact expanded its role to take on the same functions and responsibilities as those previously held by the police and the local NDP in the town. What helped to facilitate this process was the previously mentioned judicial decision in March 2011 that forced the Egyptian government to dissolve local and popular councils. These were the places that usually accommodated the local branches of the NDP, as this study has discussed. It was believed at this time that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) was trying to absorb popular anger by scapegoating the NDP and figures from the old regime. But as we saw in the previous section, this was also because these councils were subjected to reconfigurations by SSIS policies that aroused indignation of the bifurcated state's grassroots. At the local level, this move established a power vacuum and allowed

many groups to govern themselves in Cairo's peri-urban fringe and other areas, especially after the subsequent step of dissolving the NDP itself.

This chapter will argue that Kerdasa's PC during the transitional phase was a structural substitution for the local NDP, after the later had been subjected to a process of marginalization during the second half of the 2000s, and after the collapse of the subsequent informal system of power led by the SSIS due to the revolution. As the previous chapters argued, the local NDP in Cairo's peri-urban fringe could be viewed as an informal extension of the SLA that was involved in localizing the state. It was argued that the local NDP men, from the early 1990s at least, were perceived by the state and by themselves as representatives of the social space. However, as we saw in the previous section, while the local NDP had been alienated by the bifurcated state on the eve of January 2011, it was the revolution that completely paralyzed it and excluded its players from the political field. From 2011, the local NDP was no longer able to assume its functions due to the revolution and also by law. Its social agents suddenly found themselves with no social or political capital.

The political field was opened up again, and since many of its previous occupants were paralyzed, new occupants had to fulfill the vacant positions. Thus, a vacuum was created, which was immediately filled by new players who came to assume the same functions that had previously been performed by their predecessors. And so the PC took charge. As this chapter will show, the PC in Kerdasa, in the transitional phase, was also motivated by neighbourhoodism, as its rhetoric, activities and forms of social organization were all to express a claim to represent social spaces. Moreover, this chapter will show that the new players in charge of the PC were mainly local social agents from different backgrounds who had previously been excluded from local politics from the 1980s to the early 2000s. They

arose because the revolution had newly legitimized most of those who could be considered opponents of the bifurcated state.

5.2.1 The PC in Charge

From the Friday of Rage until Mohammad Morsi was elected as President of Egypt, Kerdasa was administered by the PC led by Sheikh Mahdi Ghizlani. In March 2011, Mohammad Nasr Ghizlani, a leading figure in the Jihad Organization who was active in the mosque movement, was released from prison along with dozens of other jihadists.[85] The day after his release, Nasr Ghizlani became the vice chairman of the PC, before taking over Sheikh Mahdi's position after the latter's death in February 2013. He and Sheikh Mahdi Ghizlani launched many serious initiatives aimed at the development of public services in the town. In eight months, from March to November 2011, the committee formed several subcommittees that were responsible for keeping an eye on different aspects of Kerdasa's socio-economic life such as security, gas and wheat flour supplies, cleaning, dispute settlements and even removing some illegal constructions.

In the first four months, until June 2011, most efforts were put into creating a kind of 'civilian police' to protect the town and put an end to the acts of *baltajiya* that flourished after the revolution. They succeeded in preventing many thefts, notably of automobiles. Apprehended

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[85] See the report on the release of Mohammad Nasr Ghizlani: ("The Interior Ministry conditionally releases 10 prisoners," 2011). In my interview with Nasr Ghizlani, he suggested that the SCAF might have released jihadists in March 2011 in order to manipulate them against the MB. (Mohammad Ghizlani, Ibid.). Later, however, many jihadists would be on the side of the MB against the deep state and others became embroiled in terrorism in Sinai.

criminals were handed over to a police station outside Kerdasa (on the Cairo–Alexandria desert road). Security subcommittees also brought an end to the phenomenon of teenage gangsters who were involved in purse snatching and begging from townspeople in streets. Most importantly, the PC led by Mahdi Ghizlani, using *da'wah* and Islamic preaching, invited many *baltajiya* to refrain from *baltaja* acts and to repent to God. A few of them, such as Emad Sa'idi, would join the committee and bring their experience to bear in serving it.[86] In May 15, 2011, for example, a principal of a public school in Kerdasa asked the PC to send a "force" to secure the examination from bullies (Appendix IV). On the eve of the presidential elections in May-June 2012, the PC's security powers had reached such a level that they were able to provide the police themselves with protection when they came to Kerdasa to take away a criminal arrested by the PC, according to members of the committee (Mohammad Ghizlani, Interview; Hussain Omar, Interview; Shadi Beik, Interview).

The PC's services were not restricted to security matters. As mentioned above, another subcommittee was later formed to supervise the supplies of gas and wheat flour. Dozens of young people volunteered in shifts to watch over government bakeries as well as stores of gas cylinders, the supply of which was notoriously subject to corruption. Members from the PC told the author that they succeeded within a short time in terminating most corruption and monopoly practices with the cooperation of the City Council (*markaz al-madina*) (Ibid.). In this period, according to an owner of a propane warehouse (*mustawda'*), the stealing of gas nearly stopped altogether and the price of gas cylinders was strictly fixed at five LE,

[86] Later in March 9, 2016, the Egyptian Security Forces assassinated Emad Sa'idi in Pyramids Gardens west of al-Giza governorate. ("A defendant in 'the massacre of Kerdasa' was killed by police," 2016).

whereas its price had reached to 50 LE on the black market (Mohammad Khattab, Interview). According to Nasr Ghizlani, the PC at that time coordinated with Bassim Odah, who was responsible for the PCs in the al-Giza governorate (later he would become a Minister of Supply and Interior Trade in the MB's government) (Mohammad Ghizlani, Ibid.). By November 2011, the PC claimed that it fundamentally solved the gas crisis in Kerdasa by prohibiting the selling and buying of gas cylinders on the black market and by coordinating with the governorate to provide the city with more gas units, Ghizlani said (Ibid.).

The PC also worked with the City Council with regard to facilitating the process of issuing construction and building permits. This process is notorious for its complexity and corruption as well as its wasting of time due to bureaucratically slow procedures. In many cases, the PC succeeded in forcing violators to remove their constructions from public properties or at least to settle their cases with the City Council (Ibid.). For instance, they negotiated with a few squatters who occupied small plots in the town's cemetery (Hussain Omar, Ibid.). Eventually, they managed to persuade them to leave of their own volition by reminding them that this act is forbidden in *sharia* law (*haram*) and by paying them compensation (Ghizlani; Omar, Ibid.). Furthermore, the PC used its influence to force the City Council itself to replace the building services engineer due to his involvement in receiving bribes from violators (Ibid.).

A subcommittee was also formed to handle customary law issues, and to settle disputes and problems between families. Numerous documents, seen by the author, indicate that the PC was trusted by many townspeople in settling their cases (Appendix VI; Appendix VII). Finally, it was said that the committee handled the issue of town's hygiene successfully. Similar to many Egyptian cities and urban quarters following the removal of Mubarak, most

of Kerdasa's streets, roads, and public facilities were cleaned by groups of volunteers within weeks. Impressively, the PC also convinced al-Giza governorate to designate a plot of land in the town to become a garbage dump and recycling centre. They made arrangements with many *zabbalin* (garbage collectors who make living by collecting trash door-to-door from the residents and recycle most of it). They also recruited eighteen vans to collect the waste from every place in Kerdasa. Members of the committee told the author that the project was very successful. According to them, not only did it solve the problem of garbage in Kerdasa, it also contributed to the drawing of profits from the recycling process and created job opportunities for many young people (YouTube, 17 Mar 2013; 18 Mar 2013).

Independent sources (i.e. many Kerdasians I spoke to) confirmed these claims and some of the PC's accomplishments were played-out in the Egyptian media (ON TV, 16 Jul 2011).[87] The PC also created a YouTube channel and a Facebook page to show to Kerdasians their activities and services. However, there is no way of knowing whether these 'accomplishments' were objectively stated by the leaders and members of the PC, or whether they were exaggerated. Furthermore, we do not know if this kind of civic work was carried out with the same level of enthusiasm that had characterized it immediately after the revolution. What we do know is that the PC considered itself to be the representative of Kerdasa and the guardian of its amenities, as well as its public institutions. In short, as Nasr Ghizlani put it, "we were almost a self-government" (Ghizlani, Ibid.). Moreover, the state

[87] In December 2013, the Egyptian Central Bank confiscated funds of the project, along with those of 1054 other institutions across the whole country that were considered affiliated with the MB. See: ("A list of the institutions confiscated by the Central Bank," 2013)

(represented by the City Council, the Governorate of al-Giza and the Interior Ministry) acknowledged the PC and its claimed status. At least, this is what we can infer from the communications between the PC and the state's institutions (Appendix V (A) and Appendix V (B); Appendix VIII).

Given that the Egyptian state is extremely sensitive towards the issue of local governance, to the extent that it has never tolerated any semi-autonomous representative units at the local level, why was it willing to permit an independent entity like the PC in Kerdasa to gradually replace its functions locally? The fluidity of the political atmosphere following the revolution made the state's apparatuses behave hesitantly towards any kind of popular movement on the peripheries, and their focus was then on inner cities, especially Cairo. However, Kerdasa's PC was aware of the capacity of local entities of the state to manifest hostility towards any kind of power outside the state. Consequently, they were keen to inform the state's apparatuses of all their activities and to coordinate with them at almost all times. For example, the PC had an IT expert who was responsible for issuing identification cards (with electronic barcodes) for all who volunteered for security subcommittees. All registered names, along with copies of their national identity cards, as the author was informed by the IT expert himself, were passed on to the City Council as well as the Governorate of al-Giza itself (Beik, Ibid).

In fact, the Ministry of the Interior itself acknowledged the achievements of the PC when the Head of Security in al-Giza governorate, Abdin Yousef, honoured both Mahdi Ghizlani and Mohammad Nasr Ghizlani because the PC had succeeded in arresting a gang of thieves led by one of "the most dangerous" of the *baltajiya* in al-Giza, Waleed Abu al-Dahab, after members of the PC in July 2011, laid a trap for his gang. The PC seized from them 2 machine

guns, 2 rifles, a quantity of marijuana and 380,000 LE. Egyptian newspapers wrote about the incident, stressing that the police could not have arrested those criminals without the assistance of the PC ("Car thieves have been arrested in Kerdasa," 2011). Generally, the PC kept receipts and written acknowledgments from the police, Interior Ministry, the Governorate, and the City Council, regarding everything (and everybody) they had handed to them (Appendix V (A) and Appendix V (B). The PC's activities were not restricted to working with the local institutions. It also tried to expand its coordination with the Military. This took place when dozens of young people helped the army and police in protecting polling stations during the March 2011 constitutional referendum, the 2011-12 parliamentary election, and the 2012 constitutional referendum.

Even the local supervision of bakeries and gas cylinder stores in Kerdasa involved a degree of cooperation with the City Council. The minutes of a meeting and a subsequent agreement (dated in May 21, 2011), of which the author has received a copy, show that the PC took over bread and gas distribution points after having ensured that an official decision from the City Council had been issued regarding this matter. The document stipulates "the dismissal of three public-sector workers [in Kerdasa] due to the dereliction of their duties and the appointment in their place of three members [recommended by] the Popular Committee". The document also stipulated the right of the PC to supervise wheat-flour distribution points and to inform the authorities of any breach in protocol (Appendix I). Nonetheless, the PC's work did not pass without some obstructions from corrupt employees in the City Council. For instance, officials from the Supply Management (*idarat al-tamwin*) ruined some bakery machines in order to halt bread supplies and push local people to complain against the PC.

The PC, in its turn, was aware of these attempts and informed the City Council as well as the Governorate.

We have many accounts which indicate that the flourishing of PCs and their assumption of the roles of local governance was a general phenomenon, at least in Greater Cairo. It is observable that popular committees were devoted to "community development and reform as well as neighborhood watches". In Basatin, an informal settlement southeast of central Cairo, the PCs "extracted the provision of essential state services—gas lines, lighting and health clinics" (El-Meehy, 2012). This can also be observed in other Cairo neighborhoods, such as Umraneya, Boulaq Abu Eila, Boulaq Dakrour, Maspero, Dokki, Dar al-Salam and Agouza, where the "incredible political energy that accompanied the popular efforts […] involved a huge array of community-oriented activities in which citizens took urgent issues into their own hands". According to Harders and Wahba, the PCs told proud stories of "successful conflict with the local administration over water and electricity shortages, paving streets, acting in "place of the dissolved local councils" (Harders, 2015; Harders and Wahba, 2017). The media also reported similar cases in many areas.

Scholarship, the international media and public opinion have all celebrated these initiatives, considering them to be the soul of the Egyptian revolution, a new chapter in the history of popular participation and a demonstration of the incredible power of the real civil society that was unleashed after the breakup of authoritarian rule. No doubt these informal networks presented impressive examples of local energy and its will to reform. However, the following section will take a contrary position, and will argue that this form of popular participation in local governance was no novelty. Instead, it can be viewed as a continuity of the same form of local governance that had been monopolized by the local NDP, rather than the advent of

a something unprecedented. The novelty lay in replacing the old players with new ones who were more popular and had been previously excluded from the political field.

5.2.2 A Déjà Vu?

Who was in charge of the PC in Kerdasa? The Head of Committee was Sheikh Mahdi Ghizlani, a *Sheikh al-Arab* and real-estate entrepreneur. Those who ran the sub-committees were mainly respected figures who had been active in the mosque movement from the 1970s to the early 1990s, such as Mohammad Sayed Ghizlani, Mohammad Nasr Ghizlani, Ali Qinawi, Khaled Sa'd, and Sayid Zinnari, among others. They had previously been repressed and excluded from the political field, as we saw in Chapter 3. However, the committee on the ground was not restricted to Islamists. It also encompassed dozens of youths from different social and ideological backgrounds, such as members of the April 6 Youth Movement, and even a few former members of the NDP, but the majority had not previously been politicized due to their age (M. M.; H. U., Interviews). Nevertheless, there was an indication that the committee was also driven by kin-based mobilization, since the leadership was dominated by figures from just one large family: the Omars. It also seems that many of the youths on the ground were either from the Omars or were linked to them by affinity and friendship. This latter aspect reminds us of the strategy that had previously been used by the NDP veterans to mobilize their grassroots: clannism.

This latter fact elicited some discreet criticism from a few youth members of the committee, such as Khaled Abbas. Abbas is a lawyer from Kerdasa who belonged to the initial group that founded the PC (Various interviews), but later left. He said that at its initial stage, the PC encompassed many Kerdasians with a vision of developing the town's facilities during

the state's absence. Abbas has stressed, nevertheless, that "a specific *a'aila* and direction [i.e. Islamists]" seized the committee and started from May 2011 to exclude all who disagreed with their agenda. Abbas in a meeting with members of the PC in June 2011, accused Mohammad Nasr Ghizlani and his associates of having "stolen the revolution from those who actually made it" (since Ghizlani himself was in prison prior to and during the eighteen days of the revolution). Nasr Ghizlani responded by arguing that "it is not necessary for those who planted the tree to reap its fruits", according to Abbas (Khaled Abbas, Interview).

This early criticism, however, did not seem to prevent the PC from pursuing its work according to the old formula. In September 2011, the PC acted as a mediator to convene a reconciliation meeting between the families of the victims of the Friday of Rage and the police to enable the return of the police, after promises were given that those responsible would be held accountable. A conference was held on their return to confirm this precondition (ON TV, YouTube, 21 Sep 2016). The Ministry of Interior gave official recognition to the PC's leadership after the latter contributed to the rebuilding of the police station. Official cards were printed for the PC leaders, which indicated acknowledging their organizational body (Ibid.). However, what made the situation complicated was that the PC did not dissolve itself after the return of the police, or after the presidential elections in May-June 2012. Thus, what was supposed to be temporary turned out then to be permanent, or at least this is what members of the PC aspired to.

The PC was also aware that it needed a legal status to work under. Therefore, its leadership acted in the same way as many other PCs in Egypt during the transitional phase (El-Meehy, 2012). They founded an association under the name of 'Nahdet Baladna' ('The Renaissance

of Our Town'), which they registered, and within which they carried out their activities. However, the PC insisted that they undertake roles that were beyond the limits of any association, such as monitoring the state's local institutions and maintaining security. Thus, the PC not only functioned as a local council, but also acted as civilian police. Over time, it was obvious that the PC would intimidate the local state, the police and the NDP veterans. The latter were threatened especially after the dissolution of their party by a court order in April 2011, and also because they had been stigmatized after the revolution, becoming known as *fulul* (remnants of the old regime). Nevertheless, despite the fact that they were vulnerable and almost powerless, they still had one weapon that has proven to be effective in Egypt: the power of rumour.

Hence, following the presidential election, and especially after Morsi's Constitutional Declaration in November 2012, rumours began to fly concerning the PC's activities. The PC was said to be forcing a 'Brotherhoodization'[88] of the town's institutions, to be involved in

[88] 'Brotherhoodization of the state' (*akhwanat al-dawla*) was a discourse that the MB's opponents used to accuse the MB and its supporters of taking over the state's apparatuses by replacing the bureaucracy's senior officials with its members. Later, these accusations would be used by non-Islamists and the Egyptian deep state to topple the elected president. Some accounts considered Brotherhoodization was real. According to Reem Abu-El-Fadl, Brotherhoodization was the process that President Mohammad Morsi used to confront the military by "concentrating semi-dictatorial power around himself in order to create a party state". The aim of this process, Abu-El-Fadl says, was to establish a semi-dictatorship of the MB in which "the army would share power as the junior partner in the arrangement" (Abou-El-Fadl, 2015, p. 127). Patrick Haenni, on the other hand, contends that Brotherhoodization was an overused expression but "it does aptly describe the organization's relationship to weak state institutions" such as the state-owned media and the Ministry of Religious Endowment. (Haenni, 2016, p. 29). However, both accounts neglect the fact that the MB members

baltaja acts, including the blackmail of workers in the informal market, and to have prevented police officers in July 2012 from prescribing penalties against members of the PC or their friends. The PC was also said to have harassed those who worked with the presidential candidates Hamdin Sabahi and Ahmed Shafik during the 2012 presidential elections campaigns.[89] As usual with rumours, they came thick and fast, and cannot be verified.

As can be seen, the 'Brotherhoodization of the state' was the perfect weapon of symbolic violence as an accusation, and was used by local groups and national entities to defend their diminished status after the revolution. However, this accusation also had its foundations at the local level – not in terms of replacing the employees of the local state's institutions with Brotherhood members (who were a minority in Kerdasa's PC), but rather in terms of replacing the roles that had been undertaken by the local NDP. In this sense, it is not difficult to observe that most of the achievements (*injazat,* sing. *injaz*) of the PC in the transitional phase were no different to those of the NDP veterans when they were in charge. As we

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were informally prohibited from working in public institutions prior to the January 25 Revolution. Hence, it should be no surprise that the public sector's door was opened to the MB members as citizens. At any rate, the July 2013 military coup showed that the claimed 'penetration' of the state by the MB was very limited since the army did not have much difficulty in toppling the elected president and his party.

[89] Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub himself told the author that he was subjected to *baltaja* acts by members of the PC who accused him of receiving two million LE from Hamdeen Sabahi (a prominent left-wing politician and a presidential candidate in 2012 and 2014 elections) in order to guarantee his family votes. According to Mahjoub, Sheikh Mahdi Ghizlani intervened to prevent three youths from making trouble for him. (Mahjoub, Ibid.)

discussed previously, the local NDP from the mid-1980s to the mid-2000s was an informal extension of the SLA, in which its figureheads manoeuvred among the state's institutions and pressured them to develop their localities. We called this process the localization of the state. Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub spoke, as we saw in Chapter 2, of his *injaz* to convince the state to allocate nine feddans for a school complex, a vehicle-licensing agency, and a youth centre. He was proud – in a similar way to Ghizlani in this chapter – of the less than one feddan used for the recycling centre. This followed the same logic as Ghizlani, except that in the latter's time, the bifurcated state's institutions were willing to concede anything to avert the people's anger during the months after the revolution, which made the PC's *injazat* faster and easier to be achieved.

The members of Kerdasa's PC were not aware that they were introducing the same model as that of the NDP in local politics. They believed that they were breaking new ground. But for the NDP veterans, it was a *déjà vu*. Therefore, when they came retrospectively to evaluate the PC's work, they did not criticize it for being Islamic, or for being dominated by the Omars. They castigated it for its lack of experience, or for behaving in a manner that they considered insane. Based on their experience, they were aware that the PC had misread the boundaries of local politics as a political field. They knew that you do not 'force' the bifurcated state to do what you think it should do, but rather that you negotiate with it and convince it. Furthermore, they knew that there was no way that the bifurcated state would accept the idea of a semi-armed informal network that would share responsibility for policing, not even in dreams. The Egyptian bifurcated state has no mercy towards those who challenge its "ritual of presence" (Ismail, 2006a, p. 134).

Remarkably, both the local NDP in the Mubarak era and the PC after the revolution derived their legitimacy from the same source. As the NDP veterans' attitudes towards the bifurcated state and their localities were shaped and influenced by neighbourhoodism, the PC also derived its legitimacy from its claims to represent the social space. Its leadership and members perceived themselves to be guardians of the town's amenities, institutions and public services. They introduced themselves as an entity that spoke for Kerdasa and represented the will of its residents.

Nevertheless, the PC was later to behave like a political group. This occurred between the Constitutional Declaration in December 2012 and the aftermath of the military coup, when the PC organized demonstrations in the middle of town, near the police station, that supported the elected president and his government. Later, in July-August 2013, the PC also organized demonstrations against the coup. But on the day of the breakup of the Rabia al-Adawiya and Nahda protest camps, violence would break out.

5.3 "We had a deal!": The Road to the August 2013 Clashes

Kerdasa became known to the Egyptian Media after the bloody clashes that occurred on 14 August 2014 after the breakup of the Rabia al-Adawiya and al-Nahda protests camps, when, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, hundreds of townspeople attacked the police station, firing bullets and rocket-propelled grenades. They killed 11 police officers. The Egyptian media circulated video clips showing the station totally burnt. Blood covered the internal walls of the building and dead policemen were shown half-naked in their own blood, while voices around them could be heard celebrating and shouting "allahu akbar" (YouTube,

21 Aug 2013). Another video showed hundreds of townspeople protesting around the station and a few of them setting fire to it (YouTube a, 14 Aug 2013).

One of the state-owned TV satellite channels interviewed a survivor of the tragedy, the deputy inspector Ashraf Abdel-Aziz, in his bed at the hospital immediately after the massacre (YouTube, 20 Aug 2013). In his testimony, Abdel-Aziz stated that when crowds had surrounded the police station, the police officers tried to protect themselves by shooting tear-gas and firing warning shoots. However, when the situation spun out of control, the policemen tried to flee, every man for himself. From his department there were no survivors except Abdel-Aziz himself, who managed to escape through al-Seyahi Street, where a smaller crowd surrounded him. They beat him up and yelled at him "you *kuffar*" (infidels) until he passed out. Eventually he woke up in a mosque where a few Kerdasians took care of him (Ibid.).

An eyewitness, who was later sentenced to death in the court case on the Kerdasa events, told the author that on the day of the Rabia al-Adawiya massacre, townspeople crowded around the police station from early morning, after news had come in from Cairo that two youths in the protesting camps had been killed (Khaled Zandahi and Hisham al-A'waj). The police in turn tried to push them away by shooting tear-gas and bird shot (the usually non-lethal pellets being the favored tool of the security forces for trying to disperse protests) (YouTube b, 14 August 2013). From midday, the clashes became seriously violent, especially when a group of armed and masked assailants attacked the police station firing bullets and rocket-propelled grenades. After this, eleven police officers surrendered themselves to the townspeople, who beat them to death while two young people among the protesters were killed by police who were defending the station (Hussain Omar, Ibid).

Another eyewitness, a former member of the PC, told the author that a subcommittee for managing the crisis was formed immediately after the military coup. The committee, according to him, was responsible for organizing demonstrations in Kerdasa every Friday. On the day of the bloody dispersal of the protesting camps, and after people had started to surround the police station, a delegation of local figures went to the police, asking them to leave the town with their arms to avoid hostilities. According to the eyewitness, who was actually one of those who surrounded the station, one of the officers sexually insulted the delegation. Less than an hour later, a group of assailants attacked the station. One of the assailants, according to him, was from the town and his wife had been harassed by an officer several days before. Eventually, he stated, "When the policemen surrendered, we handed all the senior officers (*dubbat*) over to the townspeople, while we released all the juniors" (K. S., Interview).

This section of the chapter will examine the violence that erupted in Kerdasa after the breakup of the Rabia al-Adawiya and al-Nahda protest camps. These clashes were conceived as part of a broader wave of political violence that pervaded the country for several months after the military coup, and which followed more than two years of extensive political polarization. For example, *Wiki-Thawra*, a statistical database of the Egyptian Revolution, listed 68 similar occurrences throughout Egypt in the month following the breakup of the two protest camps, in which people took revenge against state institutions (*Wiki-Thawra*). Furthermore, in three days following the breakup, dozens of churches were set on fire, totally or partially (EIPR, 2014). Many governmental institutions were attacked or besieged, especially in towns around the cities. The logic behind these incidents was ambiguous, as the Egyptian regime preferred to accuse the MB of committing these attacks on state

institutions, as well as Coptic churches in order to retroactively justify the military coup against the elected president (Ibrahim, 2014).

My analysis will agree that what became known as the so-called “massacre of Kerdasa” should be placed in the context of the political polarization and struggle with the deep state that occurred after the revolution. However, I will also stress the importance of considering the local dynamics that facilitated violence in many areas. In Cairo’s peri-urban fringe, as the rest of this chapter will show, political violence was also motivated by neighbourhoodism. In the clashes that took place in Kerdasa, and in the bifurcated state’s subsequent ‘revenge’, an objectification of space was present not only among local groups, but also among state agencies, the media, and the formal discourse. This section will scrutinize the bloody clashes of August in Kerdasa, and the media campaign that accompanied it, from this perspective.

We will begin with the testimony of Mohammad Nasr al-Ghizlani, who became the chairman of Kerdasa’s PC after Sheikh Mahdi al-Ghizlani passed away in March 2013. Al-Ghizlani told the author that he and other “respected personalities” went to the police station days after the military coup in July 2013. Police officers were very clear: “From now on, it will never be the same as before”. Al-Ghizlani added: “We had a deal, but they reneged on the promises they had made when they returned to Kerdasa. We were worried about them stealing our efforts, *injazat*, sacrifices and dreams. We realized then that this was a counter-revolution and that businessmen, the media and the old regime were all involved in it” (Mohammad Ghizlani, Ibid.). Thus, until the 14th of August, Kerdasa’s PC organized non-violent demonstrations almost on a daily basis, condemning the military coup and demanding that the police leave the town.

The verdict of the Giza Criminal Court on the Kerdasa case elaborated in detail the official view of what happened to the police station on 14th of August (against 183 defendants). The court questioned 104 witnesses, including police officers and townspeople. Sixteen videos and seventeen pictures were also analysed by the public prosecutor. Although the court was biased and politicized and the head of it was Mohammad Nagy Shehata (a controversial judge who had sentenced hundreds of defendants to death in previous court cases), the testimonies of witnesses offer interesting details of how townspeople reacted on that day, some of which intersect with the narratives that I have gathered ("Al-Shorouk has published the verdict of sentencing 183 defendants to death," 2015).

For example, nearly all the police officers testified that the chairman of the PC had come with other Kerdasians to demand that they evacuate the station, and that the head of the police station had refused point blank, saying "over our dead bodies!". Police officers and many townspeople stated that the crowd was chanting Islamic slogans such as "come to Jihad! (*hayya ala al-Jihad*)", "Islamic.. Islamic, the Interior Ministry are *baltajiya* (*islamia..islamia.. el-dakhlia baltajiya*)". The verdict also intended to criminalise the PC by accusing it of planning to seek revenge on the police station, and by linking it to *baltajiya* who were accused of firing RPGs to force the police to surrender and to steal the station's contents. Interestingly, the verdict also stressed the tensions between *baltajiya* and the police and concluded that the PC exploited this kind of hostility to push *baltajiya* into attacking the station (Ibid.).

Most important is what was said to the police officers when they had surrendered. According to the verdict, the attackers were chanting slogans that invoked the name of Kerdasa as they murdered the police officers. An attacker shouted: "the government is no match for Kerdasa

(*el-hokoma ma te'darsh ala Kerdasa*)". Another police officer told the court that Kerdasian women came to the station at 6:00 AM of the same day, threatening the police and saying: "if anyone from Kerdasa dies, you will be killed here!". Other testimonies also described townspeople attacking the station and throwing stones and Molotov cocktails while crying out the name of Kerdasa (Ibid.).

Finally, the court emphasized that what made the large crowds surround and attack the station was that the defendants were trusted by the townspeople *(kalemethom masmoa'a*). According to the verdict, the defendants took advantage of their influence on the townspeople due to the fact that some of them were *imams* at mosques or teachers in schools. Thus, they were able to convince more than two thousand people to participate in the crime. Ironically, the court concluded: "due to the fact that the majority of Kerdasa inhabitants are from the MB, they [i.e., the people of Kerdasa] have in their hearts malice and hatred towards the police, which led them to organize and commit the crime" (Ibid.). As a result, the criminal court sentenced 183 defendants to death. (Ibid.)

Obviously, the verdict in its essence, as well as the majority of the testimonies of the police officers, not only criminalized of a group of defendants; it was also a collective condemnation and stigmatization of the whole city of Kerdasa, or at least the majority of its inhabitants. It is also obvious that the court's decision was affected by the narrative that Egyptian media produced in the few weeks after the incident. In the following 35 days after the massacre, Egyptian satellite TV channels and newspapers painted a black picture of the town, turning its residents into criminals who deserved what was coming.

Dozens of news stories described Kerdasa as a hotbed of terrorism (*irhab*), a source of violent crime, and a stronghold of *takfiri* groups (predicated on declaring other Muslims to be apostates). The media behaved as though the Egyptian Army were going to war, rather than going to arrest a citizen or group of citizens, inflaming public opinion with imaginary victories over victims who were most likely innocent (al-Wafd, 19 Sep 2013; ONA Agency, 19 Sep 2013; Al-Watan, 20 Sep 2013; Al-Masry Al-Youm, 20 Sep 2013). This was a typical discourse in such situations and it resembles— to a large extent— what was documented by Singerman in "The Siege of Imbaba," when Egyptian newspapers constructed an image of the residents of Imbaba as an uncivilized, almost savage 'other' (Singerman, 2009). On the eve of the security operation, for example, the then-president of the Free Egyptians Party, Ahmed Said, attributed the police station massacre in Kerdasa to informal settlements there. Terrorism according to him was "entrenched in thousands of mosques and sanctuaries (*zawaya*) that are deployed in *al-Sa'id* [Upper Egypt] and the *a'shwa'iyat* [informal housing districts]" (Rose al-Yūsuf, 19 Sep 2013). The day after, the *al-Masry al-Youm* newspaper published a caricature celebrating "the national day of liberating Kerdasa" (Appendix III).

As can be observed from the testimonies regarding the police station massacre, a significant motivation for the clashes between Kerdasa's townspeople and the bifurcated state was a local solidarity that had emerged from people's self-articulations with their town. If local figures and "respected personalities" were able to succeed in driving townspeople to a confrontation with the state, this was not because they were Islamists, or because they were clients or followers. They succeeded by invoking the name of Kerdasa, or, to use Salwa Ismail's term, their "territorialized identity", that is, neighbourhoodism. This is not to say that factors like political mobilization at the national level, the so-called Islamic-secular

polarization, and the struggle with the deep state, are irrelevant. Rather, it is also to consider the dynamics at the local level, in which the collective cognitive structure of neighbourhoodism was also present.

In contrast, the bifurcated state also, through its security apparatuses, the military forces, the judicial institutions and the media, defined its opponents by their spatial identity. The fact that the court verdict described Kerdasa's inhabitants in terms of their collective status indicates not only the Egyptian bifurcated state's tendency to construct and categorize its citizens on spatial criteria; Egyptian state agencies also criminalized the space itself by assuming that it had been a hotbed of Brotherhoodization and terrorism. This was a pejorative discourse that can be placed within the elite discourse, which has viewed and constructed the residents of informal settlements, peri-urban towns and villages as savages and uncivilized.

Many young people of the town attempted, mainly on social media, to defend Kerdasa's reputation; firstly by claiming that the massacre's perpetrators were outsiders (i.e. from other towns or Bedouins), and secondly by blaming the Ministry of Interior itself for liquidating its staff and leaving the police station poorly guarded. However, all local narratives and justifications were futile in the face of dozens of media reports accusing the townspeople of dealing in arms, committing acts of terrorism, and embracing armed groups. Over eight weeks, the people of the town spent every night waiting for retribution and persecution.

5.3 "Liberating Kerdasa": Criminalizing the Social Space

At dawn on September 19, 2013, the security operation to storm Kerdasa began. As it is detailed in this chapter's introduction, the operation was broadcast live on television by

Egyptian channels. Dozens of homes were raided, their contents smashed and their inhabitants randomly arrested. The following day, after Friday prayers, many of the townspeople of Kerdasa and Nahia came out to condemn the raids. The police and army stationed in these two towns responded with gunfire and tear gas, leading to the asphyxiation of a number of children (YouTube, 20 Oct 2013).

Subsequently, images began circulating of burnt-out homes and the damage caused by the security forces to the houses of many local personalities (Ibid.). Anything that could be stolen was taken and the remaining contents trashed (I., M.; S. M., Interview*s*). Over the course of one week, the homes of the leaders and the members of the PC were raided. Many of them managed to flee but many also were arrested along with some members of their families. The string of arrests was not restricted to the PC; it also included hundreds of the townspeople of various political affiliations. Security forces also raided the home of Abdel Salam Bashendi, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) member of the dissolved People's Assembly, and the home of Ahmad Muqallad, the town registrar of marriages. The value of the stolen cash and jewelry was estimated to be the hundreds of thousands of Egyptian pounds (Ibid.).

Videos published in the Egyptian media showed groups of security forces searching almost every corner of the town. The security forces suspected anybody walking in streets and they entered many houses searching for weapons, drugs and items stolen from the police station. A video posted on YouTube showed several members of the Special Forces (*quwwat khassa*) interrogating a middle-age man and accusing him of stealing the door of the police station while the man tried his best to convince them that he had bought it a long time prior to the incident (YouTube, 6 Oct 2013). It was not difficult to see that this propaganda was intended

to construct an image of the townspeople as thieves and savages, who were hostile and irrational, as if the state as well as its allies among the elites had only just discovered Kerdasa (which is only eight kilometres from the capital).

Another video published by *Al-Youm Al-Sabi'* newspaper on its website purported to present the sound of gunfire and a firefight between members of the Military Forces and unknown opponents. No camera was able to capture footage of any terrorist or gunman. Opponents of the bifurcated state, including Islamists, therefore suspected that the regime had forged these videos in order to suggest that there was a real battlefield in Kerdasa (Al-Iskandrani, 2013). The Ministry of Interior claimed that a police major general was killed during the operation, but according to the forensic report, his death was caused by a 9mm bullet fired at close range that entered his right side and lodged in the lung wall. This makes it likely that he was killed by friendly fire (Ibid.).

Over the course of a week, the Egyptian media celebrated what it called "the liberation of Kerdasa". The headlines inflamed public opinion with fabricated victories. In actuality, the Egyptian security forces did not confront any resistance, simply because there were no gunmen in the city on the day of the operation. In all likelihood, the Egyptian bifurcated state simply used Kerdasa to give the public a 'quick' example of its "war on terrorism", especially after the then-Minister of Defence and the leader of the military coup, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, had called for mass demonstrations to grant the Egyptian military and police a "mandate" to combat "terrorism" (a call understood by the public as granting popular support for using violence against Islamist civilians in Rab'a and Nahda Squares).

Nevertheless, the operation also had other goals, as this section will argue. The case of Kerdasa precisely shows the way in which the Egyptian bifurcated state has dealt with its peripheries. As mentioned earlier, the Kerdasa incident was only one among a series of assaults against the state's institutions after the breakup of Cairo's sit-ins. In Egypt's peripheries—both urban and rural—the bifurcated state usually avoids applying the framework of the law and prefers to deal with whole communities collectively. In Sinai, or in some regions in Upper Egypt, for example, journalists have documented various examples of collective punishments applied by the Interior Ministry and the Military Forces in response to terrorist attacks or outlaw activities.

Thus, when the Egyptian bifurcated state decides to engage in a security operation against a village there, the predominant approach is one of collective punishment because in the bifurcated state's view the town's basic legal unit is not the citizen, as it should be, but the collective as a whole. An entire village might be punished, or an extended family, which may comprise dozens of families and hundreds of individuals. For this reason, frequently during the course of security campaigns, homes are set on fire and a number of relatives of the person sought are arrested and abused. A curfew is imposed, most likely involving 'informally' the theft of shops and houses.

In such cases, the Egyptian Army operates alongside another army made up of broadcasters and journalists, who paint a black picture of the targeted village, turning its residents into criminals who deserve what is coming. Most importantly, the bifurcated state, using naked power, intends to humiliate and punish many local figures and respected personalities who might have some sympathy towards any group that challenges the bifurcated state. In Kerdasa, the security forces were not content simply to raid the homes of all those known to

belong to the MB. In fact, the homes of many local community figures were raided, trashed, and robbed, while members of their families were arrested. These actions can only be understood as intended to humiliate the town's elite that had administered affairs following the January 25 Revolution.

In her study of Bulaq al-Dakrur, Ismail has stressed that a space of tolerance is offered by the authorities on condition that local networks have a kind of connection with the bureaucracy or at least its implicit approval. The case of the crushing of Islamic movements by the heavy hand of the state in the 1990s showed that not respecting this implicit power structure led to the demise of local figures. For Ismail, the key to understanding how informal-local government works is the politics of conviviality, which "binds ruler and ruled" (Ismail, 2006a, p. 130). *Sha'bi* quarters' residents accumulate an intimate knowledge of the everyday state. They cultivate an "intimacy with power in the sense of knowing it closely" in order to create "the context for complicity among the ruled". The state, in return, keeps for itself the "ritual of presence" publicly which must not be challenged at all (Ibid., p. 134). This explains why the bifurcated state would not tolerate any communal structure that might question its upper hand on society.

In Kerdasa, it was obvious from the performative way in which the police and military forces behaved that they were practicing what Ismail has termed a "ritual of presence", whereby the bifurcated state was asserting its existence by raiding selective targets that represented the local community. The way in which the Egyptian security forces arrested people shows that this was not based on information or even intuition, but on pre-formed attitudes and a tendency to inflict punishment and revenge. For instance, the security forces went to raid the home of Sheikh Mahdi al-Ghizlani (the former chairman of the PC) and arrest him, only to

be informed by his neighbors that he had died seven months previously. On this pattern, arrests were random and those sought came from a range of backgrounds (Islamists, local figures, etc.) (Ismail al-Iskandrani, Interview). In short, the pattern of attacking and humiliating local figures and representatives of Kerdasa demonstrates that the state was intent on flexing its hegemonic muscles.

No individual can elaborate on the way the state apparatuses dealt with the case of Kerdasa in the way that a state institution can. In February 2016, Egypt's Court of Cassation, the country's highest appeals court, overturned the death sentences of 149 defendants issued by the Giza Criminal Court and ordered a retrial. The court accepted the appeals of defendants for several reasons. One reason is that the Giza Criminal Court's verdict entailed "combining both collective solidarity and personal responsibility […] which led to a contradiction in the decision" (al-Shorouk, 16 May, 2016). In other words, the court of cassation overturned the verdict because it equalized the perpetrators of the police station massacre and the thousands of townspeople who crowded around the station who were viewed as potential accessories to the crime by inciting it. Another reason for overturning the verdict was that the Giza Court, according to the court of cassation, had relied on the heavily biased police investigations as its main evidence for finding the defendants guilty of the crime (Ibid.).

Thus, even one of the most prestigious judicial institutions of the state admitted that there had been serious problems in the handling of the Kerdasa incident by the state. The state's tendency to view the townspeople collectively suggests that the logic of citizenship, which treats every adult individually, is simply not applicable except to certain segments of society. In the peripheries, the *state of exception*, to use Giorgio Agamben's term (Agamben, 2005), has been actually the rule during the post military coup era. In this regard, people on the

outskirts of cities are usually associated with their towns, villages and suburbs and categorized as dangerous or hostile according to the space in which they live. Consequently, it would not be unusual for people to construct, in turn, their own spatial identity. As Manuel Castells puts it, "in the face of overwhelming national or global pressures, people tend to 'go home' and organize themselves locally, to fight their disputes at a territorial level" (Day, 2006, p. 140).

From 19 to 24 September 2013, a curfew was imposed. The Security Forces not only raided dozens of Kerdasa houses, they also set five of them on fire (the homes of Jamal M. Imbabi, Ashraf A. al-Zindahi, Sa'd Abu A'mira-Omar, and two other houses owned by Mohammad N. Ghizlani). The security forces also burned down a clinic owned by Mahmoud Sayed Ghizlani, and raided the hospital of his father (Mohammad Sayed Ghizlani), which they smashed up and robbed. During this operation, a special force was responsible for preventing local people from putting out fires and even arresting anyone who tried to film the burned and smashed up houses. Police also stormed sixteen other homes, again smashing them up and robbing them. (Various Interviews)

During this period, the security forces' tanks roamed Kerdasa and through loudspeakers insulted the town, its men, the MB and the recently ousted President Mohammad Morsi. The town then lived through a horrifying period in which most of its people were afraid of being brutalized, and in fear of the town being bombed from the air, as happened with many towns and villages in Sinai (Ibid.). Immediately after the operation, Egyptian satellite TV channels conducted studio interviews with commanders and colonels from the Interior Ministry, who had been in charge in the operation. The main aim of this propaganda was to emphasize to the viewers the legendary status of the operation in Kerdasa. For instance, a colonel and a

major general from the Special Forces appeared on the MBC Misr satellite channel in order to explain how complex the operation had been and how it had needed much planning. Colonel Mahmoud Nazih said that Kerdasa after the police station massacre had been a "ghost town". The town, he said, is a "group of very narrow roads and haphazard neighbourhoods (*a'shwaiyat*), which made the operation very complex and dangerous" (YouTube, September 22, 2013).

Of course, neither of these claims was true. Leaving aside the fact that a city of more than one hundred thousand people cannot be considered, in any case, a ghost town, Kerdasa, like many cities, towns and suburbs at that time, was highly mobilised due to the political polarization after the military coup. The whole country in the months after the coup, and after the bloody dispersal of the Rabia al-Adawiya and Nahda protest camps, witnessed demonstrations of tens thousands of citizens, most of which were suppressed by naked power. Secondly, it may be true that parts of Kerdasa can be considered as informal areas (which is the case for 40% of Greater Cairo), but the area targeted by the security forces cannot be considered as *a'shwa'i*. Finally, the same town after the January 25 Revolution, as we have seen earlier, had been presented and praised by the Egyptian media and the Interior Ministry as a model that should be considered by all other local governments in Egypt ("the popular committee and confronting the lawlessness [in Kerdasa]," 2011).

Facts were beside the point. The aim of the media coverage was to celebrate and praise the police as the protectors of the nation after more than two years of sabotaging it due to its brutality and human rights record, which actually had led to the 2011 revolution. Praise for the Interior Ministry, as well as the Egyptian army, was not based on genuine achievements

such as combatting Jihadist militias in Sinai. Instead, the bifurcated state found it easier to fabricate a victorious story to throw out to public opinion. This was, indeed, at the expense of the status of tens of thousands of people on the outskirts of Cairo, whom the capital's elites simply dismissed or disparaged.

Conclusion: The Metamorphoses of Neighbourhoodism

There has been an ongoing debate over the question of whether socio-political mobilization in local communities should be viewed either as an outcome of external pressures (i.e. national policies or globalization), and therefore cannot be apprehended at the local level, or, as many ethnographic studies suggest, that social mobilizations "are shaped from below, by action at the grassroots" (Day, 2006, p. 126). Both approaches, as this study shows, are indispensable in apprehending firstly, the local socio-political actions in urban peripheries in Egypt, and secondly, relations between the Egyptian state and local communities generally.

This chapter has shown that it may not be possible to understand the contemporary political violence without addressing the social medium that has shaped the political practices of actors at the local level. The previous chapters suggested that Cairo's peri-urban fringe, from the late 1970s, has witnessed the evolution of a habitus that has formed the core of many aspects of local politics. Neighbourhoodism has been an outcome of macro and micro dynamics that has led social agents to develop new political relations with their social spaces. It has pervaded their unconscious behaviour patterns and has been responsible for determining "correctnessness", political representation, and the emergence of a new type of

localism that has helped to create local politics as a political field, of which it has also been a product.

The Mubarak era, as a consequence, witnessed the rise of local social agents who derived their legitimacy and status from a politicization of their social spaces. The Egyptian authoritarian regime was able to capture their support within a system of socio-political containment thorough the SLA. The first section of this chapter showed that the struggles inside the authoritarian regime were largely responsible for the disintegration of these social agencies, but that it was the revolution in January 2011 that expelled them from the political field. However, as the rest of the chapter demonstrated, this did not lead to the decline of neighbourhoodism, since the revolution pushed forward new local agents with their own social capital to fill the gap, and who had been previously excluded, from the 1990s, from the political field. Thus, the political field became open and new social actors had the ability to convert their social capital into political capital.

The new social agencies, represented by the PCs, had no difficulty in organizing themselves collectively. This was facilitated by the collective cognitive structure that held them, but they were unaware that their collective social practices were viewed by the old social agencies (the NDP veterans) to be merely in continuity with their now forgotten history in local politics. Finally, this chapter has also revealed that neighbourhoodism was not only what underpinned social relations among local agencies, it was also one of the grounds that shaped relations between those local agencies and the bifurcated state. This was neighbourhoodism with claws. Our examination of the clashes in Kerdasa has shown that the social space was not only politicized by local agents, but that the state also perceived this space in politicized terms.

CONCLUSION
"FORGOTTEN AS HISTORY"

When I began this research, I was driven by a desire to understand what drives people to engage in politics under authoritarian conditions, despite the heavy costs involved. The forms in which social agents find a way to participate in the political arena may be in line with that authoritarianism or may challenge it. Specifically, I was concerned with the link between the various ways in which social actors perceive their social practices to be political. However, when I applied this question to my field research in Kerdasa, I found myself lost among the bewildering variety of approaches and foci within the study of state-society relations, such as informality, social movements, urbanization, neo-liberalism, rural politics, the politics of identity, globalization and localism. I came to realize that my approach had to take an interdisciplinary form, drawing on all the aforementioned fields.

One of the first lessons we learn from the sociology of everyday life is that social space is much more complicated than a simple macro-micro division would allow. Every social practice has many faces, each of which can be taken to a level of analysis in which the borders between the local, the national, the regional and the global become blurred. In most cases, nevertheless, attempts to imagine these borders have been indispensable for researchers to understand the logic behind social practices, but this should not overlook the fluidity of these boundaries and their continual metamorphosis within a changing social world. It is this interaction itself that is "the foundation of all understanding of society"(Adler et al., 1987, p. 219).

The subject of this study has been precisely to explore one aspect of this interaction. Its main contribution is towards our understanding of the "dialectical relationship between action and order" (Ibid.), in which the macro creates the historical, social, and cultural orientations that determine social practices on the micro level, but at the same time in which social practice serves "as an agent of its own self-production" (Ibid.). This approach requires not only an examination of both contemporary social practices and the underlying structures that produce them, but also a construction of the history within which the structuralization that social agents – institutions, groups and individuals – have participated within.

This study, therefore, was able to identify processes on the macro level that contributed to the structuralization of neighbourhoodism as a dominant habitus. This has been responsible for the emergence of new patterns of socio-political practice that were deployed in the political field in Cairo's peri-urban fringe in the Mubarak era. Neighbourhoodism has mobilized local social agents to develop a socio-cultural relation with their social spaces, which has redefined the sources of political legitimacy and driven newly rising groups into the political arena.

A change in the pattern of internal immigration, as this study has concluded, was the main process that led to the emergence of neighbourhoodism and its political consequences. But the Egyptian state's developmental policies (i.e. urban developmentalism, liberalism and neo-liberalism), and the emergence of a relatively developed system of local governance, have also worked to consolidate it. However, as this study has repeatedly stressed, the relationship between these macro processes has been dialectical. The Egyptian state's tendency towards decentralization, which entailed the expansion of the SLA and the

consolidation of the NDP, cannot be understood without also considering the historical tendency towards a stay-at-home inertia among the population since the mid-1970s.

On the other hand, the consolidation of neighbourhoodism led to a new socio-political pattern of individual and collective political behaviours that pervaded local politics. This pattern was observable among rising social groups of lesser notables, who shifted the terrain of political struggle to the social space, in which new battles for political representation were fought. The emergence of innumerable conflicts within the local NDP fold was the main expression of this tendency, as social agents employed various capitals, strategies and symbolic violence to safeguard or improve their positions within the political field. However, the same kind of struggle was also to be observed in the Islamic movement, as well as among other rising local elites after the revolution.

These groups have not only shared a tendency to objectify their social spaces, articulating themselves with it and undertaking political action that reflects this tendency. They also have shared an obliviousness to their being driven, mobilized and influenced by a “second nature”, the “forgotten as history” and “active presence of the whole past” (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 56) of which their politics has been the product.

This is the reason why this study stressed that uncovering the underlying social medium is important in tandem with analyzing the power relations between social agencies. Thus, this study could be considered as an exercise in approaching political localism. It offers a methodological framework to analyze different types of socio-political mobilization on the local level. Most importantly, by developing its conceptual tools, this work offers better

understanding of the social space where authoritarian rule and community politics interact in different forms, resulting in different kinds of compacts which often spiral out of control..

Hence, this work offers a critical approach to intellectually grasp a ‘social space’ where the interaction between the macro and the micro can be examined to show how the local and the global interact to produce localized politics, or how the local is localizing the national and vice versa.

Appendices

Appendix I: A meeting minutes and agreement between the PC and the City Council of Kerdasa regarding the organization of bread distribution points in the town.

محافظة الجيزة
رئاسة مركز ومدينة كرداسة

محضر اجتماع واتفاق

بين رئاسة مدينة كرداسة ومسئولي شركة المصريين القائمين على [illegible]
الإشراف على التوزيع بالنسبة للخبز وأيضا اللجنة الشعبية بالمدينة.

إنه اليوم السبت الموافق ٢١/٥/٢٠١١ وفي تمام الساعة ١٢ ظهرا بديوان مدينة كرداسة
اجتمعت اللجنة المشكلة بناءً على تعليمات السيد العميد/ رئيس مركز ومدينة كرداسة،
وذلك لبحث مشكلة المخابز والمنافذ بالمدينة من كلا من :-

١- الأستاذ/ عبد الله فوزي السيد — نائب رئيس مركز ومدينة كرداسة
٢- السيد/ عصام مكي — مستشار الوزير لقطاع الجيزة عن شركة المصريين
٣- عميد/ جمال الدين محمد عبد العزيز — مدير التوزيع بشركة المصريين بكرداسة
٤- الأستاذ/ محمد ابراهيم الغزلاني — رئيس اللجنة الشعبية بالمدينة
٥- دكتور/ محمد فوزي الغزلاني — عضو اللجنة " "
٦- الأستاذ/ علي ابراهيم الغزلاني — " " " "
٧- " / وليد سعد محمد — " " " "
٨- " / أحمد صلاح شقلوف — " " " "
٩- " / مصطفى عمر السيد — " " " "
١٠- " / أحمد محمد حسنين — " " " "

واتفقت اللجنة على الآتي :-

١- استبعاد العاملين بمنافذ القطاع العام لتقصيرهم في أداء عملهم وتعيين
بدلا منهم من أفراد اللجنة الشعبية بالمدينة وذلك بعد استكمال
مسوغات التعيين بأجر شهري طبقا لما هو متبع في التعيينات بشركة المصريين.

٢- إشراف اللجنة الشعبية على منافذ التوزيع وأيضا على مخابز شقلوف
ومخبز نجاة معوض ومتابعة عامل التوزيع عند استلام الحصة من المخبز وتسليمها
للعامل في المنفذ المخصص للتوزيع للتوقيع معه بدفتر الاستلام والتأكد من
إنتاج الخبز كاملا حسب حصة كل مخبز من الدقيق.

٣- في حالة ثبوت تقصير أو وجود مخالفات من العاملين بمنافذ توزيع الخبز بمخابز
شقلوف ومخبز نجاة معوض أو مسئولي شركة المصريين يتم استبعاد العاملين
بتلك المنافذ وتعيين بدلا منهم أفراد من اللجنة الشعبية بكرداسة

٤- تجتمع اللجنة كل ١٥ يوما باستمرار لبحث ومعرفة المشاكل وإيجاد

تابع ما قبله.

الحلول لتلك المشاكل مع وضع جدول زمني لتنفيذ الحلول والوقوف على تنفيذها.

- عرض نتيجة الاجتماع على السيد المهندس/ رئيس مركز ومدينة كرداسة
- تكليف ادارة تموين كرداسة بايفاد مندوب من التموين لمشاركة اللجنة في عملها ومن حضور الاجتماع.

هذا وانتهت اللجنة من انعقادها حيث كانت الساعة ٢,٣٠ ظهرا
وهذا محضر اجتماع وانتهائه بذلك.

أعضاء اللجنة.

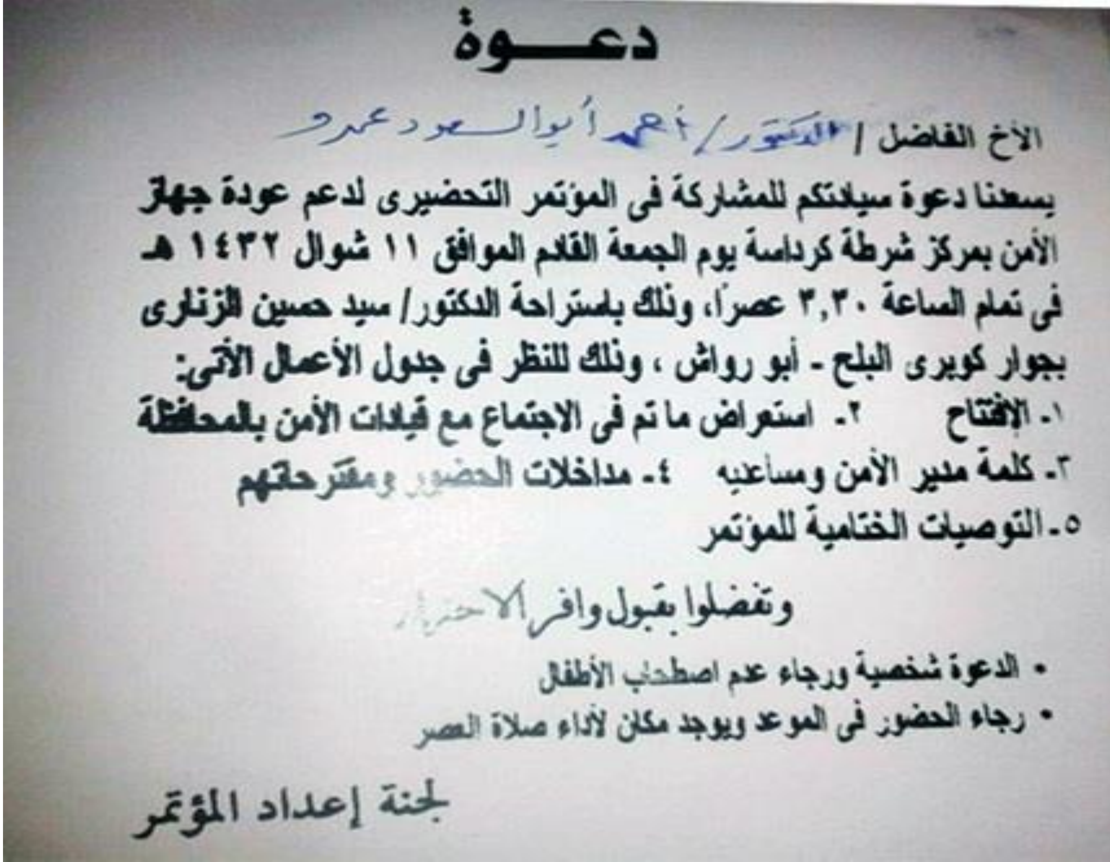
١- م/ عبد الغفور السيد [signature] ٦- علي ابراهيم علي [signature]
٢- [illegible] [signature] ٧- وليد سعد محمد [signature]
٣- جمال الدين محمد [illegible] [signature] ٨- [illegible] [signature]
٤- حسين ابراهيم الزناتي [signature] ٩- [illegible] عمر البر [signature]
٥- محمد [illegible] الزناتي [signature] ١٠- أحمد محمد محمد أحمد محمد محمد

يعتمد

رئيس مركز ومدينة كرداسة

[signature]

Appendix II: Kerdasa public meeting invitation



دعـــوة

الأخ الفاضل / الدكتور/ أحمد أبو السعود

يسعدنا دعوة سيادتكم للمشاركة فى المؤتمر التحضيرى لدعم عودة جهاز الأمن بمركز شرطة كرداسة يوم الجمعة القادم الموافق ١١ شوال ١٤٣٢ هـ فى تمام الساعة ٣,٣٠ عصراً، وذلك باستراحة الدكتور/ سيد حسين الزنارى بجوار كوبرى البلح - أبو رواش ، وذلك للنظر فى جدول الأعمال الآتى:

١- الإفتتاح ٢- استعراض ما تم فى الاجتماع مع قيادات الأمن بالمحافظة

٣- كلمة مدير الأمن ومساعديه ٤- مداخلات الحضور ومقترحاتهم

٥- التوصيات الختامية للمؤتمر

وتفضلوا بقبول وافر الاحترام

- الدعوة شخصية ورجاء عدم اصطحاب الأطفال
- رجاء الحضور فى الموعد ويوجد مكان لأداء صلاة العصر

لجنة إعداد المؤتمر

Translation: We have the pleasure to invite you to attend the preparatory conference in support of the police's return to Kerdasa's police station next Friday, Shawwal 11, 1432 AH at 2:30 PM. This will take place at the rest house of Dr. Sayyid Hussein al-Zanari next to the Balah Bridge, Abu Ruwwash. The agenda is as follows: 1. Opening. 2. Review of the meeting with governorate security chiefs. 3. Address by the Director of Security and his assistants. 4. Questions and proposals from those present. 5. Concluding recommendations.

Please note the following:

The invitation is personal, please do not bring children.

Please arrive on time. Space is available for the afternoon prayer.

The Conference Committee

Appendix III: “the national day of liberating Kerdasa”

Appendix IV: A letter (dated 15 May 2011) from a principal of a public school in Kerdasa asking the Popular Committee to send a “force” to secure the examination from bullies

محافظة ٦ أكتوبر
إدارة كرداسة التعليمية
وحدة خدمات كرداسة الثانوية التجارية بنين

السيد الأستاذ/ رئيس اللجنة الشعبية بكرداسة

تحية طيبة وبعد

نحيط سيادتكم علماً بأنه أثناء الامتحانات اليوم الأحد الموافق ١٥/٥/٢٠١١ فوجئنا بشباب داخل المدرسة وأثاروا الفوضى أثناء الامتحانات وقاموا بالتعدي على أحد الطلاب وعندما تم الاتصال بكم هرب الشباب لذا نرجو من سيادتكم التكرم بإنفاذ قوة لتأمين الامتحانات يومياً نظراً لسن الطلاب الذي يتراوح بين ١٧ : ٢٠ سنة ويستعينون بأفراد من خارج المدرسة لإثارة الشغب

وتفضلوا سيادتكم بقبول فائق الاحترام

مقدمه لسيادتكم
انور طه القزاز
مدير المدرسة

١٥/٥/٢٠١١

محافظة ٦ أكتوبر
وحدة خدمات
كرداسة الابتدائية بنين
تجاري
إدارة كرداسة التعليمية

Appendix V (A): A letter (dated 19 April 2012) from the Popular Committee to the president of the City Council in Kerdasa demanding to investigate the disappearance of a van that contains 6200 smuggled liters of petrol after they handed it to the police

السيد الأستاذ / رئيس مركز ومدينة كرداسة
تحية طيبة ... وبعد

بتاريخ اليوم ١٩/٤/٢٠١٢ في حوالي الساعة الثانية والنصف صباحاً قامت اللجنة الشعبية
بكرداسة بالتعاون مع اللجنة الشعبية بقرية ناهيا بضبط السيارة رقم « ٧٦٤٩٠ »
نقل دقهلية ماركة شيفورليه بيضاء اللون وكانت محملة بـ خمس خزانات سعة
الخزان ألف لتر + خمسة براميل سعة ٢٠٠ لتر + ١ جركن سعة الجركن ٢٠ لتر بإجمالي
حمولة ٦٢٠٠ لتر ستة آلاف ومائتين لتر بنزين (٨٠) أوكتين
وقد سلمناها للنقيب أحمد يسري معاون مباحث مركز كرداسة وقد سلمها بدوره
للنقيب الموجي مهند الأكبر لاتخاذ الإجراءات اللازمة .. وقد فوجئنا
في الصباح عندما أردنا أخذ رقم المحضر فوجئنا بعدم وجود محضر بالواقعة
كما فوجئنا أن السيارة المضبوطة غير موجودة أمام المركز

فنرجو من سيادتكم التكرم بالتحقيق في هذه الواقعة
للوقوف على هذا التقصير الفادح الذي تحيط به الشبهات
حيث أن تلك الأمور هي السبب الرئيسي في أزمة البنزين وهي أزمة
مفتعلة بواسطة هؤلاء المجرمين

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام

مقدمه
دكتور / عبد العزيز الغزالي
عن اللجنة الشعبية بكرداسة

السيد / السكرتير العام ،

إحالة للتفتيش للتحقيق في هذه الواقعة والعرض

سرعة إفادة لإحضار صورة مذكرة للنقيب / أحمد يسري وما يفيد تسليمه للنقيب الموجي / مهند الأكبر

يعرض كل الموضوع على السيد اللواء نائب المحافظ

١٩/٤/٢٠١٢

Appendix V (B): A letter (dated 19 April 2012) from the head of the Supply Management in Kerdasa responding to the disappearance of the van

محافظة الجيزة
مديرية تموين الجيزة
إدارة تموين كرداسة

صادر رقم ٢٩٦
٢٠١٢/٤/١٩

السيد المهندس/ رئيس مركز ومدينة كرداسة

[illegible]

Appendix VI: A dispute settlement (dated 13 May 2011) between two families in Kerdasa settled by the Popular Committee

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

أنه في يوم الجمعه الموافق ١٣/ ٥/ ٢٠١١
اجتمعت اللجنه الشعبيه بكرداسه بقيادة الشيخ مهدي الغزلاني وبحضور السادة
أعيان كرداسه الحاج اسماعيل الطايش والشيخ علاء الشناويهي والحاج أحمد
حسين صالح والحاج حامد حديده والاستاذ عبد الناصر الغول وبحضور السيد
كريم شحاته معاون مباحث مدينة كرداسه.
وكان الموضوع للاصلاح بين عائلتي شقلوف والشناويهي
واتفق جميع الحاضرين على الاتجاه للصلح بين المتخاصمين وأول
ما تم الاتفاق عليه هو منع التعدي بين العائلتين المتخاصمين والتزام
كل طرف بالتحاكم الى لجنة المنازعات داخل اللجنه الشعبيه وقد اقر
جميع الحاضرين على شرط جزائي قيمته ١٠٠,٠٠٠ (مائة الف جنيه مصري)
لاي شخص من العائلتين يخل بهذا الاتفاق ويتعدى على الطرف الآخر.

- طرف أول عائله شقلوف وعنهم:
١- [illegible] شقلوف
٢- احمد صالح [illegible]
٣- [illegible] عبد الله [illegible] شقلوف
٤- زكريا [illegible] شقلوف

- طرف ثان عائله الشناويهي وعنهم:
١- اسامه محمد عبد الحميد
٢- [illegible]
٣- [illegible]
٤-

وقد شهد على هذا الاتفاق كلا من:
١- [illegible]
٢- مهدي ابراهيم [illegible]
٣- علاء الشناويهي
٤- عبد الناصر محمود علي الغول
٥- احمد حسين صالح [illegible]
٦- كريم شحاته معاون مباحث كرداسة

Appendix VII: A receipt (dated 24 June 2011) that a person received his nine years old nephew from the Popular Committee after the boy had been missed for three days.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

محضر إستلام

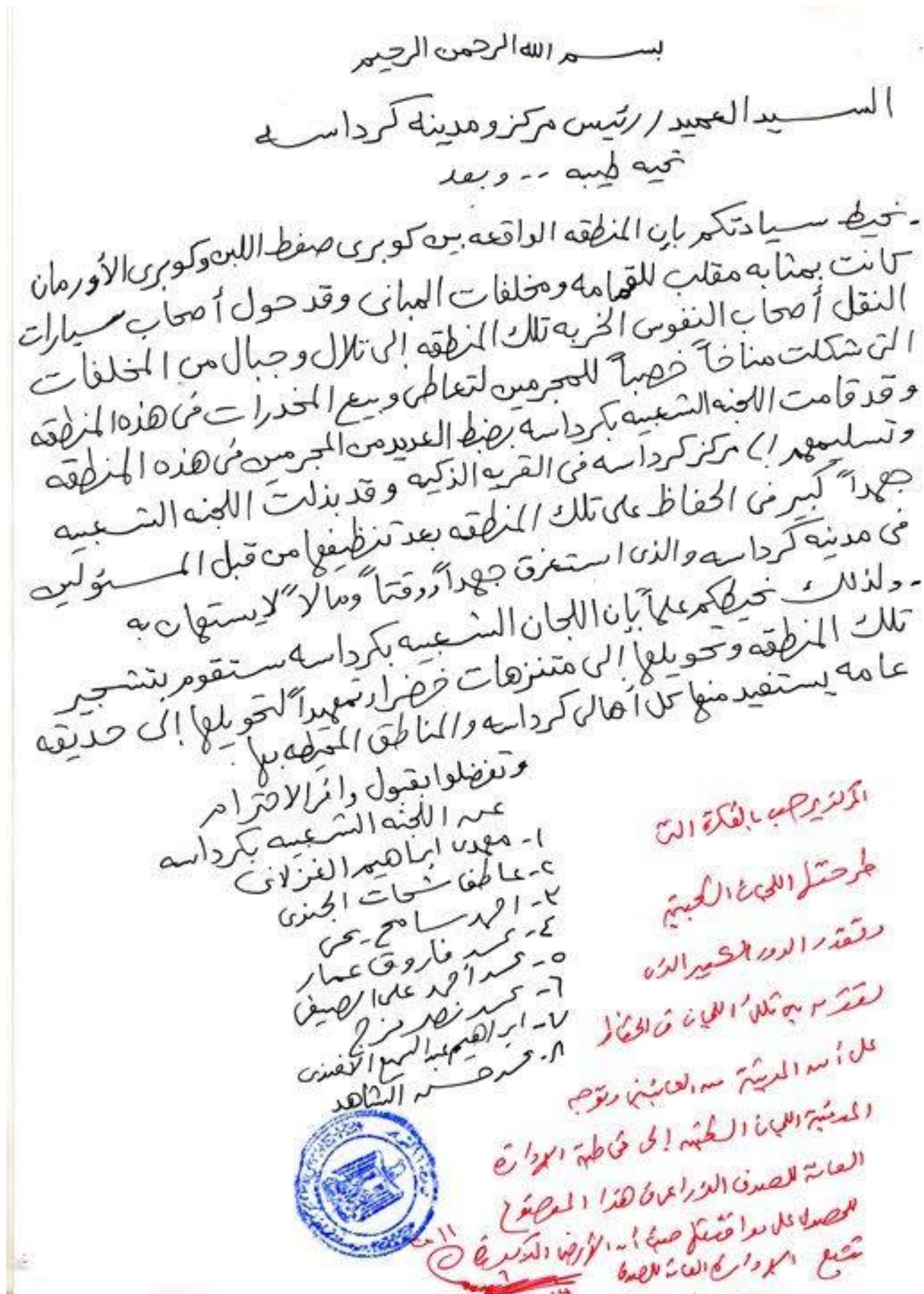
أنه في يوم الجمعه الموافق ٢٤/٦/٢٠١١ الساعه الثانيه صباحاً وبحضور
السادة أعضاء اللجنه الشعبيه برئاسه الحاج مهدي الغزلاني الاستاذ ابراهيم عبد السميع
الاستاذ أحمد ابراهيم عبد السميع، الاستاذ محسن الجمل الاستاذ محمد نبيل الصعيدي
الاستاذ محمد كمال الزاهد، الدكتور محمد نصر الغزلاني، حضر السيد/وائل شعبان سالم
محمد سلامه ويحمل بطاقه رقم ٢٨٢٠٨١٢٢١٠٠٣٩٧ واستلم ابن أخيه
المتغيب عنه منذ ثلاثه أيام والذي كان مقيماً لدى الحاج عصام محمد سنوسي بعرور
وتعهد المذكور امام الحضور بحسن رعايته والحفاظ عليه واقراره
بمسئوليته الكامله في حاله حدوث اي مكروه للطفل المذكور (سيف وليد شعبان)
والذي لا يزيد عمره عن تسعه أعوام

المقر بما فيه: وائل شعبان سالم محمد سلامه وائل شعبان سالم محمد
المقيم في ٥٢ شارع الخولاني الطالبيه البحريه هرم
تلفون محمول / ٠١٠٧٨٣

الشهود:

١- عصام محمد سنوسي بعرور — عصام محمد سنوسي بعرور
٢- محمد جمال الدين عبد اللطيف الشامي — محمد جمال الدين عبد اللطيف الشامي
٣- السيد احمد علي الشامي — السيد احمد علي الشامي
٤- مصطفى محمد سنوسي بعرور — مصطفى محمد سنوسي بعرور
٥- إسلام طارق محمد الشامي — اسلام طارق محمد الشامي
[illegible]

Appendix VIII: A letter from the Popular Committee (dated June 2011) informing the City Council that they will reforest a plot of land in Kerdasa and develop it to be a public park. The City Council (in red) responded positively**.**



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

السيد العميد / رئيس مركز ومدينة كرداسه

تحيه طيبه .. وبعد

- نحيط سيادتكم بان المنطقه الواقعه بين كوبرى صفط اللبن وكوبرى الأورمان كانت بمثابه مقلب للقمامه ومخلفات المبانى وقد حول أصحاب سيارات النقل أصحاب النفوس الخربه تلك المنطقه الى تلال وجبال من المخلفات التى شكلت مناخاً خصباً للمجرمين لتعاطى وبيع المخدرات فى هذه المنطقه وقد قامت اللجنه الشعبيه بكرداسه بضبط العديد من المجرمين فى هذه المنطقه وتسليمهم الى مركز كرداسه فى القريه الذكيه وقد بذلت اللجنه الشعبيه جهداً كبير فى الحفاظ على تلك المنطقه بعد تنظيفها من قبل المسئولين فى مدينه كرداسه والذى استغرق جهداً ووقتاً ومالاً لا يستهان به

- ولذلك نحيطكم علماً بان اللجان الشعبيه بكرداسه ستقوم بتشجير تلك المنطقه وتحويلها الى متنزهات خضراء تمهيداً لتحويلها الى حديقه عامه يستفيد منها كل أهالى كرداسه والمناطق المحيطه بها

وتفضلوا بقبول وافر الاحترام

عن اللجنه الشعبيه بكرداسه

١- مهدى ابراهيم الغزلانى

٢- عاطف شحات الجندى

٣- احمد سامح يحيى

٤- محمد فاروق عمار

٥- محمد احمد على الصيفى

٦- محمد نصر مرزوق

٧- ابراهيم عبد السميع الافندى

٨- محمد حسن الشاهد

المركز يرحب بالفكرة التي طرحتها اللجان الشعبية ويقدر الدور الكبير الذي تقوم به تلك اللجان في الحفاظ على أمن المدينة من العابثين ويوصي المركز اللجان الشعبية إلى مخاطبة الإدارة العامة للصرف الزراعي لهذا الموضوع للحصول على موافقة حيث أن الأرض المذكورة تتبع الإدارة العامة للصرف

Appendix IX: The former chairman of the Popular Committee Sheikh Mahdi Ghizlani with the then head of Kerdasa's police station and to the right the chief of police in al-Giza governorate (*Hikimdar*). The picture was taken during one of the reconciliation councils (*majalis al-sulh)* to settle settling the cases of the two victims who fell dead during the 28 January clashes.

Central Interviews Used in the Study

Name	Occupation/ Career/ political affiliation	Location	Date(s) of interview	Notes
Abdel Salam Zaki Bashandi	The MB	Khartoum	26 Jan 2017	Through research assistant
Ismail Abu Hussain	Merchant (old man)	Kerdasa	23 Apr 2016	Through research assistant
Ahmed Abdel-Wahhab Mahjoub	The NDP	Kerdasa	(a) 16 Apr 2016 (b) 25 Dec 2016	(a) On Skype (b) Through research assistant
Ahmed Hulail	The mosque movement	Germany	18 Apr 2016, 22 Apr 2016	VoIP
Ahmed Nizili	Son of Sayed Nzeili	Cairo	18 Sep 2013	VoIP
Ashraf Rajab	The MB	Istanbul	22 Mar 2016	Personally
Aysha Ghizlani	Yousef Abdel-Salam Saleh's sister	Istanbul	29 Apr 2016	Through research assistant
Hussain Saleh Omar	The PC	Istanbul	Several Interviews	Personally
Ismail al-Iskandrani	Journalist	USA	4 October 2013	VoIP
K. S. M.	Jihadist	Istanbul	*Withheld*	*Withheld*
Khaled Sa'd	The mosque movement	Istanbul	Several interviews	Personally
Khaled Abbas	The PC	Kerdasa	Several Interviews	VoIP
M. A. M.	The NDP	Kerdasa	*Withheld*	*Withheld*
M. H.	The NDP	Kerdasa	*Withheld*	*Withheld*
M. I.	The PC	Kerdasa	*Withheld*	*Withheld*
M. S.	The PC	Kerdasa	*Withheld*	*Withheld*
M. M.	The MB	Saudi Arabia	*Withheld*	*Withheld*
Moa'z Tareq Mikkawi	Tareq Mikkawi's son	Kerdasa	30 Apr 2016	VoIP
Mo'ataz Mikkawi	The NDP	Kerdasa	Several interviews	VoIP
H. U.	The NDP	Kerdasa	*Withheld*	*Withheld*
Mohammad Abu Mousa	The NDP	Kerdasa	25 Dec 2016	Through research assistant
Mohammad Ghizlani	The mosque movement, al-Jihad Organization, the head of the PC	Istanbul	21 Mar 2016, 23 Mar 2016	Personally
Mohammad A. Khattab	The SLA (gas warehouse)	Kerdasa	21 Mar 2016	Through research assistant
Mohammad Azayzeh	Textile workshop owner	Kerdasa	28 May 2016	Through research assistant
Mohammad Hasanin Mikkawi	The NDP	Kerdasa	24 Feb 2017	Through research assistant
Mohammad Khamis Abu Issa	textile workshop Owner	Kerdasa	12 Apr 2016	VoIP
Mustafa Yousef Abdel-Salam	Yousef Abdel-Salam's son	Kerdasa	23 Apr 2016	VoIP
Sayed Hussain Zinnari	The mosque movement	Kerdasa	4 February 2016	Personally
Shadi al-Baik	The PC	Istanbul	1 Apr 2016	Personally

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