Visual Communication and the Mediatized/Professional City

From Street Billboards to Offices of Urban Planning in Cairo

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Agenda

Trigger and Concepts

Research process

Research methodology

Argument and questions

The context of real estate billboards in Cairo’s bridge

The physiognomy of real estate billboards in Cairo’s bridge

Following real estate billboards: the network behind

From street billboards to offices of urban planning in Cairo
Mediatized Worlds

“points to the fact that the articulation of meaning in an everyday life-world is unquestionably interwoven with the processes of media communication.

Within mediatized worlds the moulding forces of media are a constitutive part of their social construction.”

(Hepp, 2013, p. 41)
Research Process

The process in practice

The reversed research process (from the street to the embedded network)

Planning and design offices

Marketing Agency

The street experience

Logo & slogan

Theme

2D plans

3D images
Research Methodology

209 Billboards

10 Interviews
Research Methodology

This interrogation is processed in this paper through adapting an assemblage ontology and using Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) starting from the street billboards as a representation of the urban-visual experience and going backward to planning offices which create part of the billboard content (the promoted 3-D rendered images).

Using Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) starting from the street billboards as a representation of the urban-visual experience and going backward to planning offices which create part of the billboard content (the promoted 3-D rendered images).
Research Methodology

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Argument and Questions

It is argued that there are different media assemblages that are used/employed by different actors/actor groups - and that through the specific assemblages of media one could reflect on (1) planning practice; how is planning done (2) the kind of city, planners see/plan and (3) the kind of public sphere they co-produce/are part of.

the research questions that guide this study are: Which planning knowledge is communicated to the general public (in street billboards in Cairo) and how this knowledge is constructed (in planning offices)?

and what are the constructed media assemblages in these processes?
6th of October Bridge billboards
The physiognomy of real estate billboards in Cairo’s bridge
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39% Real Estate Billboards

85% of real estate billboards are in English
The physiognomy of real estate billboards in Cairo’s bridge
The physiognomy of real estate billboards in Cairo's bridge
Abotera and Ashoub (2017) discuss the dominance and exclusivity of billboards in Egypt, describing them as “reproducing nature and dominating spaces of representation”. They argue that billboards focus on marketing the scarce resources of water and greenery in the Egyptian urban environment (Abotera & Ashoub, 2017).
Castle land mark....More space better life

The Ridge Villas....Elevated life

La Fontaine....Live the water front

Stella Park....Every home with a view

e tc.
23 Real Estate projects/developers, 21 of which were Western (English and French names), with only 2 developer names in the Arabic Language (Amer and Emaar).
This means that all of the advertising budget is allocated towards only **0.002 percent** of the 100,972,073 Egyptian population (Worldometers, 2019).

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**Billboards City Vs Everyday Cities**

According to the CAPMAS, in 2019, it was noted that the private sector established 221,187 housing units with total investment of around **LE 77.3 billion**

By assuming that families in Egypt are 4 persons. The **221,187 housing units** accommodates around 56000 families.

Given that, the price of one 16 x 10 m billboard in the Bridge costs **200,000 LE** (Around 12,000 $) per year (Al- Muhtwa newspaper, 2019).
40% of the population in the Greater Cairo region live in informal areas [El-Shahat & Khateeb, 2013], only 2% have moved to the promoted compounds [Shawkat & Hendawy, 2016].
The physiognomy of real estate billboards in Cairo’s bridge

Pattern 1
Text Only

Pattern 2
Text and Image
Following real estate billboards: the network behind

- **Targeted Public**: who are addressed by the billboards (target customers)
- **General Public**: who pass by the billboards (potential customers)
- **Owners of the buildings/land on which the billboard is placed**
- **The printing company** which prints the poster of billboard
- **Marketing agency/department** which constructs/rents the billboard
- **Advertising agency/department** which designs the text and images in the billboard
- **Investor/project owner**
- **The New Urban Communities in Egypt** (responsible for new cities)
- **The General Organisation of Physical Planning in Egypt** (responsible for old cities)
- **Urban planners: designers** who plan the new building/city
- **Urban planners: visualisers** who visualise the billboard images
- **The General Public** who pass by the billboards (potential customers)
Following real estate billboards: the network behind

Targeted Public who are addressed by the billboards (target customers)

General Public who pass by the billboards (potential customers)

Investor/project owner

Owners of the buildings/land on which the billboard is placed

Marketing agency/department which designs the text and images in the billboard

Advertising agency/department which constructs/rents the billboard

Computer software which is used to create the images in the billboard

Printers which is used to print drafts of the images

Papers which is used to view drafts of the images

Urban planners: visualisers who visualise the billboard images

Urban planners: designers who plan the new building/city

The planned project building/city

Building codes and legislations

The New Urban Communities in Egypt (responsible for new cities)

The General Organisation of Physical Planning in Egypt (responsible for old cities)

Advertising codes and legislations

The poster on which the billboard is printed

Selected 3-D images for the billboard

The construction of the billboard

Billboard theme/text

The printing company which prints the poster of billboard

The buildings/land on which the billboard is put

Owners of the buildings/land on which the billboard is placed

The printing company which prints the poster of billboard

The planned project building/city

General Public who pass by the billboards (potential customers)

Targeted Public who are addressed by the billboards (target customers)
Following real estate billboards: the network behind

The agency of the billboards

The public are excluded but targeted

Planning is media
From street billboards to offices of urban planning in Cairo

“If designers become aware of their networked practice, they avoid reproducing existing power constellations unknowingly. Plus, they become more receptive for the expertise and knowledge types of the so-called lay people, amateurs or opponents.”

(Chavarría & Stollmann, 2018)
From street billboards to the offices of urban planning in Cairo: An emerging new role for urban planners

Urban planners get reconstruct by the images they produced

Urban planners produce the images in street billboards

Planning and design offices
- 2D plans
- 3D images

Urban planners/designers BECOMING VISUALIZERS
Conclusion

In a way, planners visualize plans and after that these images recreates planners.

Material and physical conditions as well as media assemblages produce this material (billboards) in everyday life as well as in planning profession. Hence, media as an important tool in communicating planning and the city to the general public, urban planners become one of the influenced micro publics who does not only create it also but also get affected by it. On one hand, in a mediatized city, the mediatized city is the professional/real estate city that targets upper classes and vice versa. On the other hand, in a mediatized city like Cairo, urban planning becomes media.
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