

Branding Urban Spaces as an Approach for City Branding -Case study: Cairo City, Egypt

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Abstract—With the beginning of the new century, man still faces many challenges in how to form and develop his urban environment. To meet these challenges, many cities have tried to develop its visual image. This is by transforming their urban environment into a branded visual image; this is at the level of squares, the main roads, the borders, and the landmarks.

In this realm, the paper aims at activating the role of branded urban spaces as an approach for the development of visual image of cities, especially in Egypt. It concludes the need to recognize the importance of developing the visual image in Egypt, through directing the urban planners to the important role of such spaces in achieving sustainability.

Keywords—Urban branded spaces, brand image, sustainable development, Cairo.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE visual image of any city is a main character for urbanization. In this realm, successful urban branded spaces form one of the main elements of the visual image, which help attracting tourists and residents.

In this realm, Egypt is lacking this kind of spaces. This paper deals with identifying the concept of urban branded spaces and its role in achieving sustainable development. Then the paper proposes a group of recommendations which benefit converting this space into an urban branded one, and put the basic considerations that should be considered during planning and designing urban branded squares.

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

There is a shortage of presence of successful urban branded spaces in many of the Egyptian cities, which can have a great importance as a tool to attract tourists, and a main element of the urban visual image. Thus, the paper tries to answer the following questions:

-Is it possible to develop the operations of urban planning and design to enable the inclusion of urban branded spaces? And what are the motives for that?

-What are the factors, which can convert urban spaces into an urban branded image?

-What are the main criteria that can be used in forming urban branded spaces?

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III. URBAN SPACES

Urban spaces are considered one of the important components of the visual image that have significant effect on urban environment. Those spaces are identified as "planned open spaces which are usually located in the center of the city. It can be a place for tourists and community members to meet, a suitable place to hold celebrations, and open markets or political rallies. Most of those spaces have distinct elements such as fountains, or landmark as memorial"[1].

IV. URBAN BRAND-IMAGE

"Brand image is the visual image generated by several non-physical factors to express specific message which is realized by users" [2]. So, it means "converting the urban environment to a distinct brand not only linked to the visual image but also expanded to an urban experiment. "Nation branding is a means, by which more and more nations are attempting to compete on the global stage"[3]. Branding in the urban areas is a process of differentiation and diversity in terms of city urban development as cultural facilities, historical buildings, urban squares to create characteristic visual images of the place" [4], "and the need to link it to the brand image of the city"[5].

V. URBAN BRANDED SPACES

It is the spaces that can be classified as distinct brand through linking the visual image of these areas to the brand image by holding several cultural, social and economic activities with the importance of declaration about it by several ways aiming at strengthening the urban character of the place, in a way that enable it to compete globally through presence of valuable urban and historical elements. Also, there are global distinct spaces which overlook one of the valuable urban or historical buildings. The aim of urban branded spaces is to strengthen its economic aspects.

VI. CASE STUDIES OF SOME URBAN BRANDED SPACES IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

There are several successful examples of global urban branded spaces, as follow:

A. Red Square in Moscow

"Red Square is the most famous central urban space in Moscow, and one of the most famous in the world. It is overlooked by the former Royal Castle and is currently the official residence of the Russian government, and other buildings such as, the Cathedral of St. Basil, Kazan Cathedral,

and the State Historical Museum. The most relevant image in the square is the Cathedral of St. Basil, with bulbar colored domes. It was used as a main market in Moscow and the various public celebrations, declarations, and in some cases, the official ceremonies by Russian governments" [6] (Fig. 1).

B. Navona Square in Rome

"It is one of the most famous spaces in Rome, and was built above the oval shaped Domitian playground. It was used for festivals and sporting events. Its main attractive elements are the fountains. The square is surrounded by a group of Roman buildings with Baroque style, and the Palace of Pamphili. This square hosted theater event and some artists display their products of art, also some bands, "[7]. In order to increase the physical return of the place and thus achieve sustainability (Fig. 2).

C. Market Square in Heidelberg, Germany

This square is considered the main entrance of the famous castle in Heidelberg, it is connected to the castle through a major route that starts from the castle to the square where the fountains are located in its center, surrounded by architectural distinctive buildings, in the style of Baroque, and there are a lot of cafeterias and shops. Therefore, it is considered a major tourism attraction element for the city (Fig. 3).

D. Trafalgar Square in England

"It is one of the major tourism attraction areas in London, and one of the most famous squares in England. It is located in the heart of London, and is classified as one of the urban branded spaces due to the presence of the National Museum in the northern part, and the Palace of Westminster in the southern part, which are buildings of architectural and historic value. The other factor that gave the square an international reputation is its design method; it was previously an ordinary square that was re-planned by the architect Norman Foster. The main cars pathway which was overlooked by the palace was diverted to a path for pedestrians, and it is known as a place for social gatherings, celebrations and events such as the World Cup. In addition, it contains monuments such as Nelson's Column and fountains, which make it more than just an open space " [8] (Fig. 4).

Thus, it is important to strengthen the visual image of cities through establishment of branded spaces. As seen in Table I.



Fig. 1 Red Square in Moscow
Source: Red Square, Moscow, home page, 8 Sep, 2011.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Square



Fig. 2 Navona square in Rome
Source: Piazza Navona, Rome, home page, 9 Sep, 2011
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piazza_Navona



Fig. 3 Market square in Heidelberg, Germany
Source: Market Square, Heidelberg, Germany, home page, 8 Sep, 2011
<http://www.travel1000places.com/visit/germany/heidelberg/16>



Fig. 4 Trafalgar Square

Source: arch center, Trafalgar Square, 15 June, 2011
<http://architecture.org.nz/2011/06/15/trafalgar-square/>



Fig. 5 Main elements of king square, Stuttgart, Germany

Source: The researcher. Stuttgart home page, 20 Sep. 2011
<http://www.europeanhotelspecialist.com/top-5-historical-sites-in-stuttgart/>

TABLE I
A COMPARISON BETWEEN SELECTED EXAMPLES FOR STRENGTHENS THE VISUAL IMAGE OF CITIES

		Red Square	Navona square	Market square	Trafalgar Square
urban role	Urban image				
	landmarks				
	landscaping				
	furniture				
environmental role					
social role					
economical role					
historical role					
cultural role					
marketing role					

VII. ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE KING SQUARE IN STUTTGART, GERMANY

King Square is located in Stuttgart, Germany, in the middle of King Street, which is not only the longest commercial street in that city, but also in Europe. The square in its center, overlooking the Royal Palace is considered one of the most beautiful architectural elements.

A. Site Documentation

The key elements of the king Square are adopted to strengthen its visual image, represented in many of the important buildings and the landmarks, and its link to economic, social and cultural activities, considering its relationship to King Street as an essential axis to commercial activity and entertainment in the city. It had also linked to the city's main park through secondary axes (Fig. 5).

B. The Role of the King Square in Achieving Sustainability

Its roles can be summarized as follow:

The urban role:

King Square helped to strengthen the visual image at the level of King Street and at the level of Stuttgart in general. It is considered one of the global urban branded spaces due to the following:

-Linking both visual and urban branded images, by connecting visual image of surrounded urban environment to cultural and social activities.

-The aesthetic role, as it has helped to emphasize the urban characteristics of the place because of its landmarks; as the obelisk located in its center and the fountains, in addition to the king's palace, the old Stock Exchange building, and the building of the old castle, which are overlooked by the space, and which are buildings with architectural and historical value. In addition to the museum building and art gallery, that was recently redeveloped.

-This space is specialized for pedestrians only, after converting King Street to a path of pedestrians. Thus helped to restore the visual identity of the place, and helped the user to feel the distinctive urban nature, and his realization to the buildings of historical and architectural value. And good coordination of the landscape elements in the space, which is represented in the distribution of green areas, water collections, and places to sit. This helped to emphasize the aesthetic side of the yard (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6 king square, Stuttgart, Germany

Source: Stuttgart home page, 20 Sep. 2011

<http://www.europeanhotelspecialist.com/top-5-historical-sites-in-stuttgart/>

The environmental role:

The space had achieved environmental success, represented by using landscaping and water elements, which help to raise environmental efficiency. Trees help to protect pedestrians from summer sun and works to soften and purify the air.

The use of fountains helps to improve the atmosphere. As the yard is limited only to pedestrian movement, it is also "contributing to reduce the environmental pollution and noise pollution resulting from cars traffic movement"[9] (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7 Softscape in king square, Stuttgart, Germany

Source: Stuttgart home page, 20 Sep. 2011

<http://www.europeanhotelspecialist.com/top-5-historical-sites-in-stuttgart/>

The social role:

This square is considered an urban social space, where the daily meetings, public celebrations are performed and which helps to increase social cohesion among residents. This indicates the success of the idea of the space and it can be said that the King Square was able to link the urban environment to the social activities represented in the celebrations, etc. (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8 Activities in king square, Stuttgart, Germany

Source: Germany travel, Stuttgart sights, 3 January 2012.

<http://www.justgermany.org/germany/stuttgart/stuttgart-sights.asp>

The economic role:

This space plays an important economic role, due to its touristic and commercial activities. It is of touristic importance due to the presence of buildings with historical and architectural value, as the royal palace and the old Stock Exchange building. The commercial interest is shown in the old stock exchange building which has been converted to shops and cafeterias, some artists display their products and some bands doing performances in order to increase the income. In the New Year celebrations, shops for gifts are opened, therefore, these manifestations are a proof of the success of the planning thinking of the space

The historical & cultural role:

It plays an important cultural and historical role, as it contains many cultural and historical buildings. The cultural buildings as arts gallery and the museum overlook the space directly, and the historical buildings of distinctive architectural style are represented in old castle which have unique architectural style, the new palace and the old stock exchange building which have historical value.

The marketing role:

It is the role of the space in converting the urban visual image into a brand image, through the media, activities and methods of attraction. This is done through websites, as the home page for Stuttgart, where the Palace Square appears. The brand image can be strengthened through organization of numerous activities as 2006 World Cup shows, which was announced by publications and TV ads, websites. Thus, the square was able to link between urban environment and the place-based activities (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9 The marketing role of king square, Stuttgart

Source: Germany travel, Stuttgart sights, 7 May 2012. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/rocktaeschel/102987478/in/photo-stream>

VIII. THE BASIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR DESIGN URBAN BRANDED SPACES

It is a must for urban branded spaces to occur because of their important role in improving the visual image of the urban environment and achieving sustainability. There is a group of considerations that must be taken into account when planning and designing urban branded spaces as; Fig. 10.

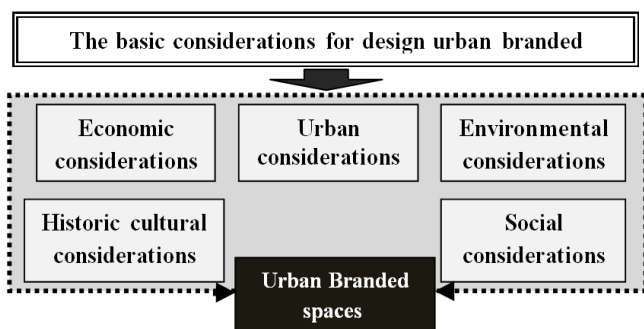


Fig. 10 The basic considerations for design urban branded spaces

A. Urban Considerations

They are all the tasks that must be considered to strengthen the urban aspect as

Considerations concerned with the visual image:

-“As a place brand is a representation of identity which are constructed through historical and culture assets” [10], so it is important to link the visual image of the space with the brand image, by linking it to cultural, economic and touristic activities through advertising.

-Emphasizing on the character of the place, using a group of attributes and landmarks, which give the space its unique independent identity through treatment of buildings facades overlooking the space to suit the architectural style of the city.

This besides converting the elements of urban environment of the space to icons with a high value, either by choosing places of squares in front of buildings with architectural or historical value, or development of buildings overlooking the squares to become buildings with an architectural or

functional value, such as creating buildings as museums, the opera or theaters,... etc.

Considerations concerned with spatial formation:

-The importance of landscaping of the space, including pedestrian walkways, green areas and water collections, with attention to lighting and furniture components.

-Harmonization of activities and different functions, as some uses such as restaurants, shops, works to enrich the space with life and movement and spirit of entertainment.

-Strengthening the trends leading to the space. Therefore, these spaces are considered a nucleus for the development of the surrounded urban area, and a strong tourism attraction factor.

Considerations concerned with the brand-image:

These are a group of factors that help in converting the urban visual image into a branded image, through the media, activities and methods of attraction. This is done by various means, including, for example; websites, news programs, contests and publications. As for the methods of attraction, it is the set of activities that are conducted inside the space, as the celebrations that are related to the cultural background, artistic performances, the activities of community participation, such as human development and political awareness..... etc.

B. Environmental Considerations

As cities can brand themselves with green spaces" [11], it is important to use landscape elements that help to raise the environmental efficiency of the space.

C. Social Considerations

The interest in the pedestrian movement becomes one of the important designing trends to achieve sustainable urban design. This can be achieved through; designing of seating areas that would help to strengthen social relationships and the importance of emptying the space from cars traffic as a way to achieve social efficiency of the vacuum and comfort for pedestrians, as Branded spaces help to create urban spaces that facilitate making meetings, public celebrations and gatherings which help to increase social cohesion" [12].

D. Economic Considerations

“As city branding should lead to successful economic development” [13], it is important to provide places for shops and cafeterias, which help to restore the economical capacity of the place. This effect extends on the surrounding urban environment.

E. Historical & Cultural Considerations

It is preferable to choose the places of these squares in front of buildings of architectural value, whether buildings with historical or functional value.

-The historical buildings are considered a cultural background to the visitor to identify the distinctive architectural style.

Thus, it can be said that there are many tasks that should be considered when planning and designing urban branded spaces. It is obvious that the center of Cairo suffers from

urban congestion, as a result of the absence of open spaces, which negatively affect the visual image of Cairo. That is why it is important to take the trend towards converting one of the main squares in downtown Cairo with a special character to an urban branded square.

IX. "ABDEEN SQUARE" CAIRO; CONVERTING "ABDEEN SQUARE" INTO AN URBAN BRANDED SPACE

"Abdeen Square" is an important point that contributes to strengthen the visual image of Cairo. Accordingly, the paper proposes a set of tasks that must be recognize when converting "Abdeen Square" to an urban branded space, which are based on the previous theoretical study as follows:

A. Reasons for Selecting "Abdeen Square"

"Abdeen Square" is one of the most important historic central squares in Cairo, due to its location in one of the historic commercial districts in the central of Cairo. This square has historical weight where it directly overlooks "Abdeen Palace", a building with architectural, historical and functional value. "The palace is considered a complex of various museums, as it includes a museum of weapons and a museum for holdings of "Mohammed Ali Pasha" family. Also, it contains a collection of rare antiques and paintings "[14]And the traffic bottlenecks in the square, which have adversely affected the visual image and increased the rates of environmental pollution. See Fig.11

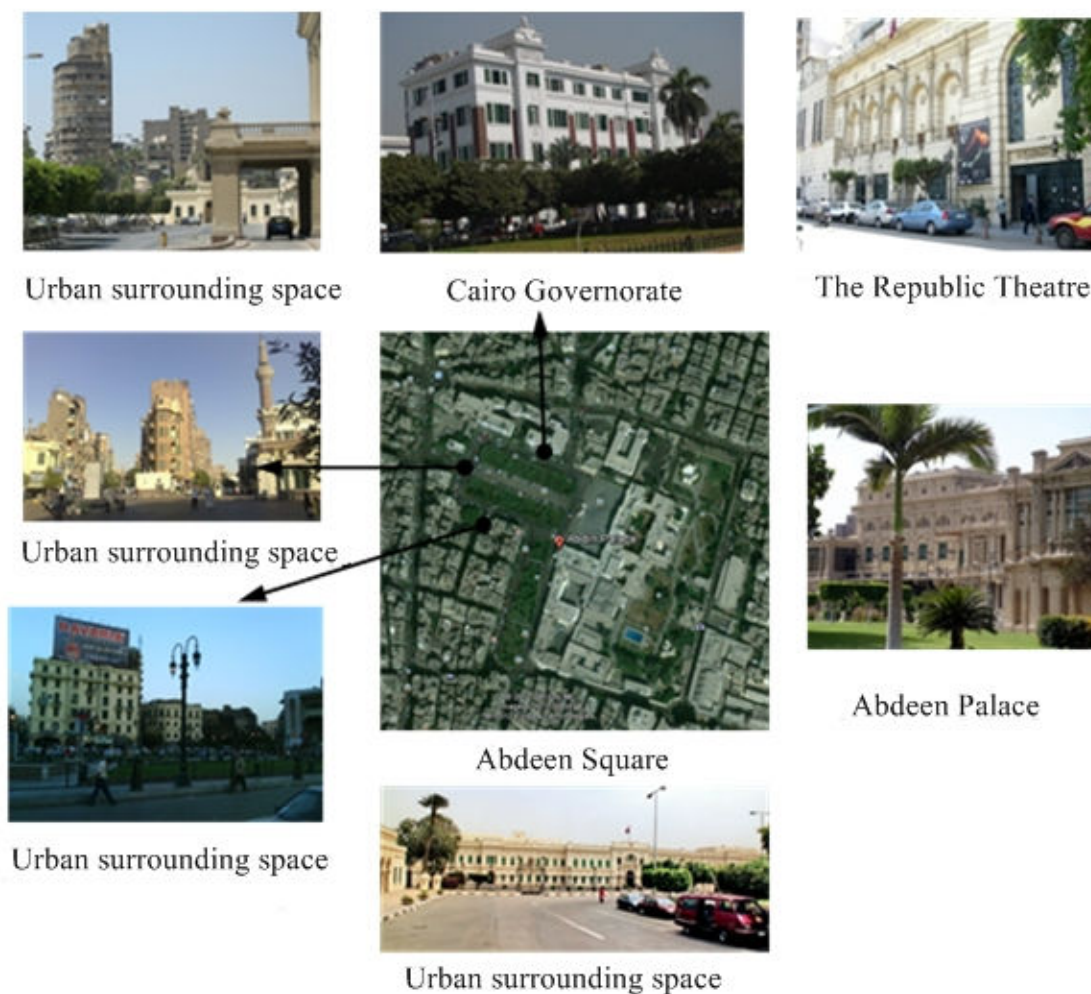


Fig. 11 Abdeen Square - Site Documentation
 Source: Google earth, researcher

B. Goals of Converting "Abdeen Square" into an Urban Branded Space

- Strengthening the visual image of Cairo, where "Abdeen square" is considered an important component of the visual image of Cairo, and creating a domain dedicated to pedestrian traffic, as cars traffic overwhelmed most streets of Cairo.
- Restoration of cultural values of the place, by improving and developing the buildings overlooking the space.

-Linking the visual image of the place to the world, to strengthen the brand image of "Abdeen square" through sophisticated ways of attraction, as many of the activities associated with the place, and advertising it in various ways.

C. Analytical Study for "Abdeen Square"

The urban role:
 The square occupies a distinct location in downtown Cairo,

and the presence of "Abdeen Palace", one of the valuable buildings, has helped to strengthen the visual image of the space. However, there are many factors that have adversely affected the achievement of urban efficiency, due to traffic jams and the square urban form, which is not efficient, where it is noted that a large area of it used as car parks.

The environmental role:

The square suffers from many environmental problems, due to high intensity of the cars movement, resulting in environmental and noise pollution. And it is lacking the presence of water elements that help improve the atmosphere.

The social role:

Celebration of art was performed in "Abdeen square" in August 2011, by self-help, which includes different performances of songs, folk dances and performances for children with their participation in many workshops for painting, ect.

The economic role:

"Abdeen Palace" Museum is considered one of the touristic attraction elements of the place; however, the absence of any other elements as shops and cafeterias reduces the economic return of the place.

The historical & cultural role:

"Abdeen Palace" plays an important historical role, as it is one of the historical buildings, as it was built in 1836, and the Palace Museum is considered one of the important cultural buildings. Celebration of art was performed in "Abdeen square" 2011, which is a festival of culture and heritage done by persons, which included different cultural performances, as an exhibition of photographs of the January 25th Revolution, presentation of a range of cultural books, handicrafts, fine and traditional arts, Eastern and Western music, and political discussions with leading thinkers.

The marketing role:

It is the role of the square in the process of transforming the urban visual image to a branded image, capable of attracting the customers, whether they were visitors, local society members, or investment individuals, through media, activities and ways of attraction, as there are several activities that is performed in the square but were not announces, whether by TV, websites, advertisement, or others. So, it is noted that the marketing role of the square is weak.

Thus, the paper proposes a group of important recommendations, which have a beneficial role in transforming "Abdeen square" to an urban branded space.

D. Recommendations of Converting "Abdeen Square" into an Urban Branded Square

The recommendations can be classified into groups, which are consisting of:

Urban recommendations:

They are all the tasks that should be recognizing to

strengthen the urban aspect.

1) Recommendations related to the visual image:

-The paper recommends cancelling car traffic in the space, because it negatively affected the urban visual image, through transforming the square to pedestrian movement only.

-Emphasis the square identity, through using a group of criteria and landmarks, which give it a unique independent identity, and treatment of buildings facades overlooking the square to suite the architectural style of "Abdeen Palace".

2) Recommendations related to the branded image:

-Reviving the historical events in the place, through performing a celebration in the square in front of the palace, with the importance of advertising about it by several means, as bulletins, websites, or documentary films and others.

-The importance of linking the visual image to the cultural, economic, social activities, and these activities should be originating from the place and encouraging its translation by different advertising elements.

3) Recommendations related to the square urban form:

-Transforming the residential buildings overlooking the square to activities that suite the wanted branded image, as some uses like restaurants and shops.

-The necessity of linking the square visually to the surrounded urban environment, by enforcing the directions and entrances leading to it, through development of "bab el-louk" street, as it is considered the main visual axis of "Abdeen square".

-Cancelling the established car parks in the space.

Environmental recommendations:

-Paying attention to landscape elements, as one of the environmental factors which help to confirm the visual identity.

-The necessity of providing the water collections as a stunning view, and to help reducing high temperatures in summer.

-Using of means of adumbration to protect against the climatic factors.

Social recommendations:

-The importance of activities related to place history and its visual image, as celebrations and encouraging its translation through different advertising elements, in a way that suites the wanted branded image.

-Clearing the square from car traffic, as one of the used means to achieve square social efficiency.

Economical recommendations:

-The importance of providing special places for shops and cafeterias, which can be placed in the lower floors of the residential buildings overlooking the space.

-Paying attention to economic activities, as the artistic exhibitions concerned with artistic paintings and band performances, which can be performed in the square and advertising about it with different means.

Historic & cultural recommendations:

-Abdeen palace is considered a cultural background for the

visitor to identify the unique architectural style, which emphasizes the transformation of the square to a pedestrian square.

-The importance of establishing activities and celebrations concerned with the historical events related to the palace of Abdeen, and announcing it with different methods as mentioned previously, aiming at reviving the culture of the

place and enforcing the branded image of the square. As seen in Fig. 12.

Thus, the paper displays a suggestion to transform "Abdeen square" to an urban branded space. Consequently, this square can be a nucleus for the beginning of development of downtown area of Cairo.

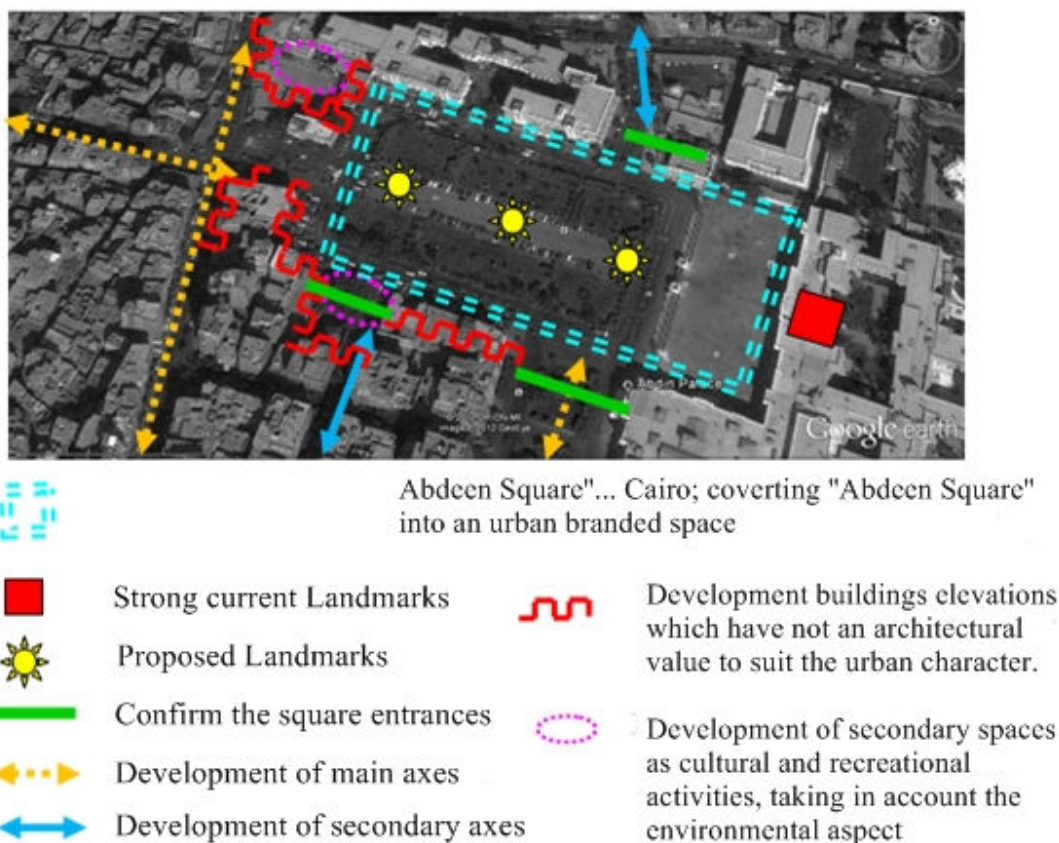


Fig. 12 Abdeen Square" ... Cairo; converting "Abdeen Square" into an urban branded space

X. CONCLUSION

The paper concluded a group of standards, which are beneficial in development and improving the visual image of Egyptian city, through discussing the most important basic considerations in forming the urban branded spaces, for being one of the main elements in forming the visual image of the urban environment, so, the paper suggests a group of significant recommendations to transform "Abdeen square" to an urban branded square, through linking the urban character of the place to several cultural, economic, and social activities, by different advertisement means to become an important touristic focus.

XI. SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION

The paper suggests the importance of developing visual image of the urban environment in Egypt, through directing urban planners and designers to establishment of urban branded spaces, and the importance of linking the visual image of these spaces to the social, economic, and cultural

activities, and using the different means to announce it, aiming at strengthening the city identity to achieve sustainable urban development. In the light of these aims, the paper concluded a group of basic standards for branding urban spaces.

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