

# BRIDGES OVER THE NILE: Transportation Corridors Transformed into Public Spaces

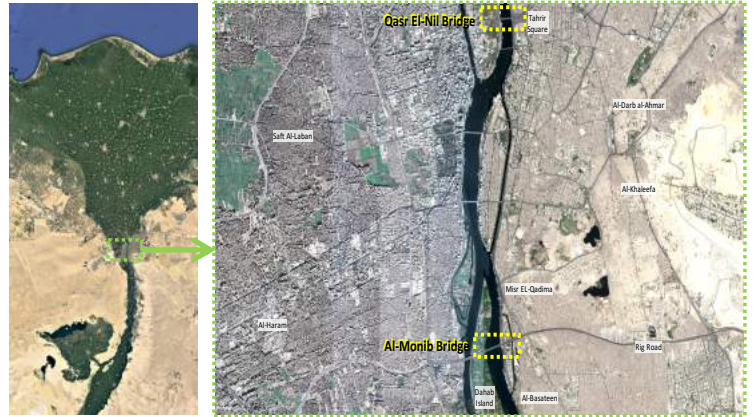
## Les ponts sur le Nil: les corridors de transport transformés en espaces publics

### Abstract

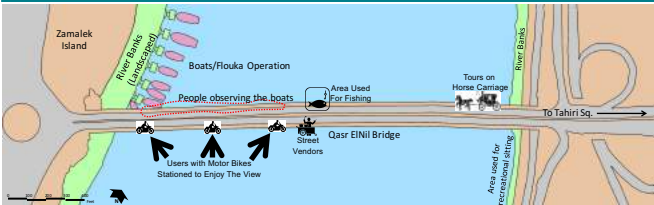
Cairo is a congested city with high rate of urbanization and very limited public space. The city has one of the lowest rates of parkland per capita of any major city. Moreover, the banks of the Nile, formerly alive with activities such as washing, fishing, and felucca landings, were by the end of the twentieth century largely cutoff from free public access by a wall of busy roads, private clubs, luxury hotels, restaurants, nurseries, and police/military stations, roads. The need for open space for people from lower income who could not afford the expensive options along the Nile banks, has resulted in use of the sidewalks of the main bridges as public spaces. Families, couples, and friends tolerate the noise and fumes of traffic to enjoy the expansive views and breezes over the Nile. As a result of this extraordinary re-purposing of the bridges, new small businesses have formed to cater to the uses, and a new interaction with the river has emerged. We studied the patterns of use, characteristics of the user population, and stated preferences of users. We identify a set of characteristics contributing to the popularity of the bridges as public space, including affordability, accessibility, openness to the river and visual connection with the other bank. We propose that these characteristics be taken into account when developing future projects along the river water front to address the need for public space and access to the Nile.

### Case Studies

We focused our research on two bridges over the Nile: Qasr El-Nil and Al-Monib bridges. We documented the activities occurring on the bridge sidewalks, the people using the space (their demographics, and from interviews the distance to their homes, their use patterns, how they interact with the river, and their reasons for using the space). We also assessed potential impacts on the urban corridor such as traffic obstruction, solid waste generation, and the generation of economic activities on the bridge. The Qasr El-Nil bridge crosses the Nile in the heart of the Central Business District, while the Al-Monib Bridge is a main traffic corridor and part of the Ring Road, offering views over Dahab Island and north to the city center.

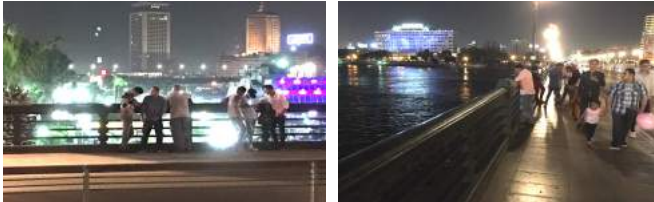


### Qasr El-Nil Bridge



**Morning Observations:** Not much of use as recreational space because of the high temperature during the summer. On the North side there are 6 people walking and no stationed or paused users on the bridge recorded at 3:45pm. One the South side only 4 people are recorded to be walking. Where the temperature is recorded to be 37.5 Celsius.

**Evening Observations:** By the time the sun is down the breeze is cool and people start to use the bridge as public space. A very interesting dance between cars parking along sidewalk and police tow truck with its flashing blue lights. On a cycle of appx each 10-15 minutes first car would stop and then another 4-5 cars would collect, until the tow truck arrived behind the last car, flashed its light and blew its siren so cars clear out. The bridge overlook buildings with aesthetic values.

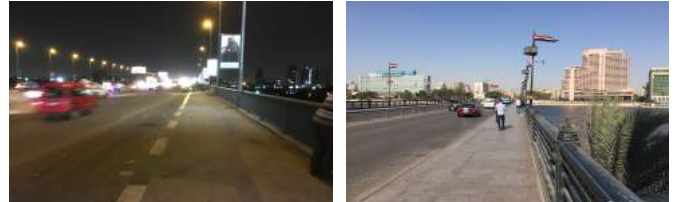


### El-Monib Bridge



**Morning Observations:** Not much of use as recreational space because of the high temperature during the summer. There are no stationed or paused users on the bridge recorded at 2pm. Where the temperature is recorded to be 37.5 Celsius

**Evening Observations:** By the time the sun is down the breeze is cool and people start to use the bridge as public space. because it is a segment of the ring road, there are no friendly U-Turns or easy possibility to change direction, therefore it is likely for its southern edge to serve people coming from Faisal and Haram. And for its Northern Edge to serve people on the way back to Faisal. The bridge provides a wide view to the Nile and Roda Island.



### People's Interaction With The River



◆ Observing Boats    ◆ Carriage Riding    ◆ Fishing    ◆ Observing Landscape    ◆ Using River Banks Under The Bridge

### Bridge's Visitors



Users of El-Monib Bridge come mainly from the adjacent neighborhoods to its West. It serves people from as close as South Giza (2Km to the West) and as far as The Pyramids & Nazlet El Batran District (14Km to the West)



Users of Qsr El-Nil Bridge come from all over Greater Cairo Area. They can be from as close as down town Cairo, which is less than 1 km walk and as far as 6<sup>th</sup> of October city (34Km to the west) or Al-Tibbeen District (37Km to the South)

### Field Observation

			Walking	Stationed	TOTAL	Male	Female
Qasr EL-Nil Bridge	Morning	North	6	0	6	6	0
		South	4	0	4	4	0
	Evening	North	32	44	76	58	18
		South	87	96	183	131	31
El-Monib Bridge	Morning	North	0	0	0	0	0
		South	0	0	0	0	0
	Evening	North	13	55	68	54	14
		South	3	3	6	5	1

### Conclusion

- Urban dwellers use the two bridges for open space and recreation
- Both bridges attract people from adjacent areas
- El-Monib Bridge has no U-Turn so people use it based on their directions
- Bridges are becoming alternative to expensive shopping malls and eating-out
- Couples find it romantic and affordable outing
- Commercial activities on the sidewalk (Hummos, Tea, Coffee, Ice cream tend to be cheaper on El-Monib than Qasr El-Nil). In Qasr El-Nil, the police won't let merchant set-up easily and stay in the same place
- Some fishermen fish from the bridge as a hobby. The economic value of catching the fish is not very high.

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