



e² design season three — A Garden in Cairo

Episode Summary

In much of the developing world, large numbers of people have moved from rural areas to urban centers looking for employment. The city of Cairo, Egypt, has not escaped that trend. From 1952 to 2005, the population of Cairo tripled bringing it to roughly 17 million by 2005. The largely unregulated influx of people into the city during those years strained the supply of adequate housing, leading many citizens to live in informal housing settlements, and limited the amount of public space. In fact, in 1984, one study estimated that the amount of green space per inhabitant of Cairo was equivalent to the size of a single footprint, one of the lowest ratios in the world. At that time, His Highness the Aga Khan proposed the creation of a park as a gift to the citizens of Cairo, believing that it could act as a catalyst for further development efforts in the city.

Given the limits that already existed on public space, finding a suitable site for the park proved to be a challenge. The only central location large enough to be transformed into a park was a 500-year-old pile of rubble in the middle of the city, essentially, a dump. At first the idea was perceived as outlandish, but by the mid-1990s construction had begun on the Al-Azhar Park. While the Darassa site provided its share of challenges, especially in regard to the excavation and soil quality, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) completed the 74-acre Al-Azhar Park in 2004.

As was Aga Khan's initial hope, the park project did act as a catalyst for restoration of historic sites and urban community development. During the excavation of the site, a 1.5 kilometer section of the historic Ayyubid wall was revealed 15 meters below the rubble. The restoration of that wall became part of the park project, as did the restoration of several mosques, palaces and historic houses in the surrounding area. The neighborhood of Darb Al-Ahmar, one of the poorest and most populated in the city, directly borders the park and became the focus for several socioeconomic development projects as well as physical restoration projects. AKTC partnered with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), municipal institutions, neighborhood representatives and local businesspeople to implement a number of initiatives including a micro-credit program, training and apprenticeships, health centers, housing rehabilitation and employment opportunities for local residents.

The Aga Khan Development Network believes that for development to be truly sustainable, projects must begin with the needs and the priorities of the community. They strive to collaborate with local residents and empower them to improve their own communities. Perhaps the Al-Azhar project cannot be exactly replicated in another city,



but the methodology that was used by AKTC could act as a model for urban development projects in other parts of the world.

To find out more about the Aga Khan Development Network, visit www.akdn.org



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PRE-VIEWING QUESTIONS

1. What purpose does public space serve in a city or town?
 2. How often do you use public spaces in your city or town? If those places were not available, where would you spend that time?
 3. What is a community development project? Can you think of specific examples in your local area of development projects?
 4. What are the potential benefits or drawbacks to community involvement in the planning of a project?
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POST-VIEWING QUESTIONS

1. In what ways can a development project empower people to improve their own lives or their own neighborhood?
2. Is a long-term commitment important for a development project to be successful? Why or why not? Give several reasons to justify your response.
3. Why are some of the local people in the neighborhood next to the park unhappy with the park?
4. What lessons can be learned from the Aga Khan project?
5. How can these lessons be applied to future projects of the Aga Khan Development Trust in Cairo and elsewhere?
6. In the episode, a man in traditional dress standing atop a mosque answers a cell phone while the voiceovers mentions globalization. How does the juxtaposition of the man at the mosque and the cell phone relate to globalization?
7. What challenges do traditional cultures face as a result of globalization?



NATIONAL STANDARDS FROM MCREL STANDARD

Behavioral Studies

Standard 1.1 - Understands that cultural beliefs strongly influence the values and behavior of the people who grow up in the culture, often without their being fully aware of it, and that people have different responses to these influences.

Standard 1.5 - Understands that the difficulty of moving from one social class to another varies greatly with time, place, and economic circumstances.

Standard 1.6 - Understands that heredity, culture, and personal experience interact in shaping human behavior, and that the relative importance of these influences is not clear in most circumstances.

Standard 1.7 - Understands that family, gender, ethnicity, nationality, institutional affiliations, socioeconomic status, and other group and cultural influences contribute to the shaping of a person's identity.

Career Education - Agricultural Education

Standard 1.5 - Knows art forms that reflect cultural elements of the local community (e.g., folk art, utilitarian objects, community environment (landscape and architecture), works of local professional artists and craftsmen).

Family/Consumer Sciences

Standard 2.4 - Understands the reciprocal impact of individual and family participation in the community (e.g., knows the community resources and systems of formal and informal support available to families; understands the importance of family participation in community and civic responsibilities).

Standard 8.8 - Understands the variety and purposes of attractions, educational programs, and specialty tours within the hospitality, tourism, and recreation industry (e.g., destination attractions, amusement parks, historical landmarks, heritage sites, museums, galleries, adventure and other specialty tours)



Geography

Standard 9.4 - Understands the impact of human migration on physical and human systems (e.g., the impact of European settlers on the High Plains of North America in the nineteenth century, impact of rural-to-urban migration on suburban development and the resulting lack of adequate housing and stress on infrastructure, effects of population gains or losses on socioeconomic conditions).

Standard 11.4 - Knows the various ways in which people satisfy their basic needs and wants through the production of goods and services in different regions of the world (e.g., growing food and shopping for food in a developing vs. a developed society, economic activities in a rural region vs. those in an urban region in the same U.S. state).

Health

Standard 2.1 - Knows how the health of individuals can be influenced by the community (e.g., information offered through community organizations; volunteer work at hospitals, food banks, child care centers).

Standard 2.3 - Understands how the environment influences the health of the community (e.g., environmental issues that affect the food supply and the nutritional quality of food).

History - World History

Standard 44.2 - Understands influences on economic development around the world (e.g., why economic disparities between industrialized and developing nations have persisted or increased, how neo-colonialism and authoritarian political leadership have affected development in African and Asian countries, the continuing growth of mass consumption of commodities and resources since World War II).

Standard 44.3 - Understands major reasons for the great disparities between industrialized and developing nations (e.g., disparities in resources, production, capital investment, labor, or trade; possible programs and measures to help equalize these disparities).