

Building Resilient Cities

Collaborative
Design for Refugee
Women and
Children with Local
Communities in
Berlin and Cairo



Habitat Unit



GUC

German University in Cairo

الجامعة الألمانية بالقاهرة



مساحة
الحياة



BENN
Marzahn-Süd

DAAD



Auswärtiges Amt

Building Resilient Cities: Collaborative Design for Refugee Women and Children with Local Communities in Berlin and Cairo

Coordinator: Dr. Juliana Canedo, TU Berlin and Dr. Ayham Dalal, GUC

Project Assistants: Qusay Amer, TU Berlin and Ashraf Osam, GUC

Non-academic Cooperation Partners: BENN Marzahn Süd, Future Hopes community foundation, 10 Tooba, Mashit Alhayy, Studio 39

Introduction

As a cooperation between Habitat Unit – TU-Berlin and the Department of Architecture and Urban Design at the German University in Cairo (GUC), students from the fields of architecture, urban design, urban planning, land-scape architecture and other fields joined the hands-on design DAAD funded workshop Building Resilient Cities: collaborative Design for refugee women and children with local communities in Berlin and Cairo. From October to December, participants from both universities, actors from civil society, developed in collaboration with the local organizations Future Hopes Community Foundation, Ma-sahit Alhayy, Studio 39, 10 Tooba and BENN engaged with collaborative design, building, scientific inputs, debates, field trips and knowledge exchange.

During Phase 1, a 3-day online Symposium provided participants with deeper theoretical inputs and reflections related to the topics of refugees and migration, collaborative methods, ethical scientific principles, among others. The inputs were given by invited guests from different fields of studies and contexts, working on the topics of displacement and community participation. Besides, students from both universities engaged in hybrid group work to start developing a joint understanding of the problems.

In the second phase, participants developed collaborative design and build with Sudanese refugees, thinking together about possibilities of improving urban space and enhancing inclusiveness and resilience in a community school located in Boulak Dakour, Cairo. Together with the students and local actors, design solutions were developed, tested and built, as knowledge-based products where new scientific notions such as “Dual Design Strategy” and designing with refugees were explored.

The third phase happened in Berlin and started with the visit and participation of GUC students in 3 different Design Studios at TU Berlin. Afterwards, Dr. Ayham Dalal and his students presented the results of the workshop in an open lecture that had the presence of around 50 people. On the second day, students from GUC and TU Berlin visited the neighborhood of Marzahn and had an input from the BENN cooperation partner. Afterwards, the students engaged in a collaborative activity with children and women living in a refugee shelter in Marzahn. The 3rd and 4th days involved a visit to important places in Berlin, where GUC students could learn more about the local context.

Overall, the Winter School sought to intensify academic collaboration, especially in the field of Forced Migration, and to develop new tools for community design that could be applicable for both contexts, and eventually, raise awareness of the participants towards the need to design and build inclusive cities and neighborhoods for refugees and citizens alike.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2024

12.30 - 12.50 p.m. | Online

Opening + Workshop goals (Team)

12.50 - 1.20 p.m. | Online

Getting to know each other (skills, experience, expectation)

1.20 - 1.30 p.m.

Coffee Break

1.30 - 1.50 p.m. | Online

Input 1: Cairo: a Refugee City? (Dr. Ayham Dalal - GUC)

1.50 - 2.10 p.m. | Online

Q&A

2.10 - 2.30 p.m. | Online

Presentation from 2 groups of students about Studio // Case

2.30 - 3.30 p.m.

Students work together // informal exchange case studies

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2024

12.30 - 12.50 p.m. | Online

Input 2: Working with Vulnerable Populations: Refugees and Children in Underprivileged Areas (Sara Nowar - Masahit Alhayy)

12.50 - 1.00 p.m. | Online

Q&A

1.00 - 1.20 p.m.

Input 3: Collaborative Design for Urban Integration: Methodologies and Practices with Migrant Communities (Margherita Vargiu - Ecole d'Urbanisme de Paris)

1.20 - 1.40 p.m.

Q&A

1.40 - 3.00 p.m.

Groups // brainstorm about methods and interaction with community // ideas interventions

3.00 - 3.20 p.m. | Online

Input 4: Mainstreaming a Parallel Process (Ahmed Zaazaa - 10 Tooba)

3.20 - 3.30 p.m. | Online

Q&A

MONDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2024

12.30 - 12.50 p.m. | Online

Input 5: Informality + collaborative design (Dr. Juliana Canedo - TU Berlin)

12.50 - 1.10 p.m. | Online

Q&A

1.10 - 1.40 p.m.

Feedback in the group

1.40 - 3.00 p.m.

Group work - Next steps

3.00 - 3.30 p.m.

Short presentation about discussed topics in the big room (5min each group)

PROGRAM - PHASE 2 | CAIRO

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2024

9.00 - 9.30 a.m. | GUC

Opening - Welcome words (Dr Ayham Dalal & Dr Juliana Canedo + Prof. Michael Eichner)

9.30 - 10.00 a.m. | GUC

Input from cooperation partners: Amal Rahal (Future Hopes Community Foundation) + Mohamed (BENN) 15min each

10.10 - 10.30 a.m. | GUC

Moderated questions to cooperation partners

10.30 - 11.30 a.m. | GUC

Presentation from students from GUC + TUB about the rooftop ideas

11.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. | GUC

Mahy Mourad (Studio 39) Feedback

12.30 - 2.00 p.m. | GUC

Lunch

2.00 - 6.30 p.m. | GUC

Cairo Tour by bus // different urban conditions in Cairo

MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2024

9.00 a.m. | Hotel

Bus pick us up from hotel to the site

10.00 a.m. - 12.00 p.m. | Boulqa, community sch.

Site visit // Collective brunch Rooftop

12.00 - 2.00 p.m. | Boulqa, community school

Group work - ideas

2.00 - 3.00 p.m.

Present to the community // feedback

3.00 - 4.00 p.m.

Bus back

OCTOBER 29, 30, 31, 2024

9.00 a.m. | Hotel

Bus pick us up from hotel to the site

10.00 - 4.00 p.m. | Boulqa

Design + plan + construction

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 01, 2024

10.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m. | GUC

Conclude design // construction

4.00 p.m. - 6.00 p.m.

Presentation

6.00 p.m.

Social Event

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 02, 2024

From 10.00 a.m.

Exhibition

PROGRAM - PHASE 3 | BERLIN

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 05, 2024

10.00 a.m. - 12.00 p.m. | TU Berlin

Participation in the MA Studio Engaging Berlin's Youth in Urban Planning: Berlin as a migrant and activist city

12.00 p.m. - 1.30 a.m. | TU Berlin

Lunch

1.30 - 3.00 p.m. | TU Berlin

Visit to IFA Building + pitch from Natural Lab, Habitat Unit

3.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m. | TU Berlin

Presentation from GUC students + open debate

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 06, 2024

10.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m. | MARZAHN

Visit Marzahn + workshop GU 2

DECEMBER, 07, 08, 2024

10.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m. | BERLIN

Tour to Berlin

Webinar

Sep 29th, Oct 3rd and 7th

Phase I



Day 1: Introduction session, allowing students from Cairo and Berlin to get to know each other. Talk by Dr. Ayham Dalal, on Cairo as a Refugee City. Afterwards, students from both cities engaged in group work on workshop topic.

Day 2: Insights into the methodologies planned to be used during the workshop. Talks by Sara Nawar from Masahit Alhady and Margherita Vargiu on Collaborative Design for Urban Integration: Methodologies and Practices with Migrant Communities. Ahmed Zaazaa from 10 Tooba presented the Mainstreaming a Parallel Process within the urban areas in Cairo. The day concluded with splitting the students into groups in order to start the brainstorming activities.



Day 3: The final online session featured a lecture by Dr. Juliana Canedo on Informality and Collaborative Design Methods. We also held a Q&A session with the students, followed by short presentations in which each group introduced the project ideas they had developed together.

Cairo Workshop

Oct 27th to Nov 2nd

Phase II





Context: the Phase 2 of the workshop focused on the spatial transformation of a community school for Sudanese refugees in the informal settlement of Boulak Al Dakrour, Cairo.



During 6 days, students co-developed alternatives to improve the conditions of the school for the children and teachers, focusing on the classrooms and the rooftop.

Day 1: The first day focused on introductions. Students had the possibility to meet in person, and we attended lectures by professors from the German University in Cairo. Additionally, Cairo-based students presented their findings from previous site visits, where they had conducted analyses of the area.



Day 2: On the second day, we visited the Community School, where we met the teachers, the school's head, and the pupils. This visit provided an opportunity to engage in conversations with the staff and understand the needs of the school. We also conducted collaborative design activities with kids, teachers, and families who regularly use the building.





Day 3: The students developed intervention plans for the project. The first step involved documenting existing structures on the school's rooftop, with the goal of recycling materials and integrating them into the new designs. Based on insights from previous workshops, the teams devised implementation strategies for their ideas.



Days 4, 5 & 6: The last 3 days marked the beginning of the actual construction work. We reached out to local professionals, including carpenters and blacksmiths, to assist in the building phase. On the last day, we celebrated the successful completion of the workshop with students, teachers, and members of the local community.



Social Event: At the end of the 6th day, teachers, parents, and children organized a social event for all the participants of the workshop, where we could celebrate and make use of the space of the rooftop developed in the past days. With traditional Sudanese food, music and art, it concluded the exchange and collaboration between the involved groups.



Before and after: The pictures of before and after and 3D model presented below show the architectural development of the co-design implementations. The space of the rooftop was developed as a potential common space for the neighborhood as well as an open air classroom in a context of very high density, with very few public and open spaces, and with crowded and unhealthy classrooms. The co-design of the spaces with refugee children and women allowed in the process not only to acknowledge their desires, memories and needs, but to further create a sense of belonging and appropriation.



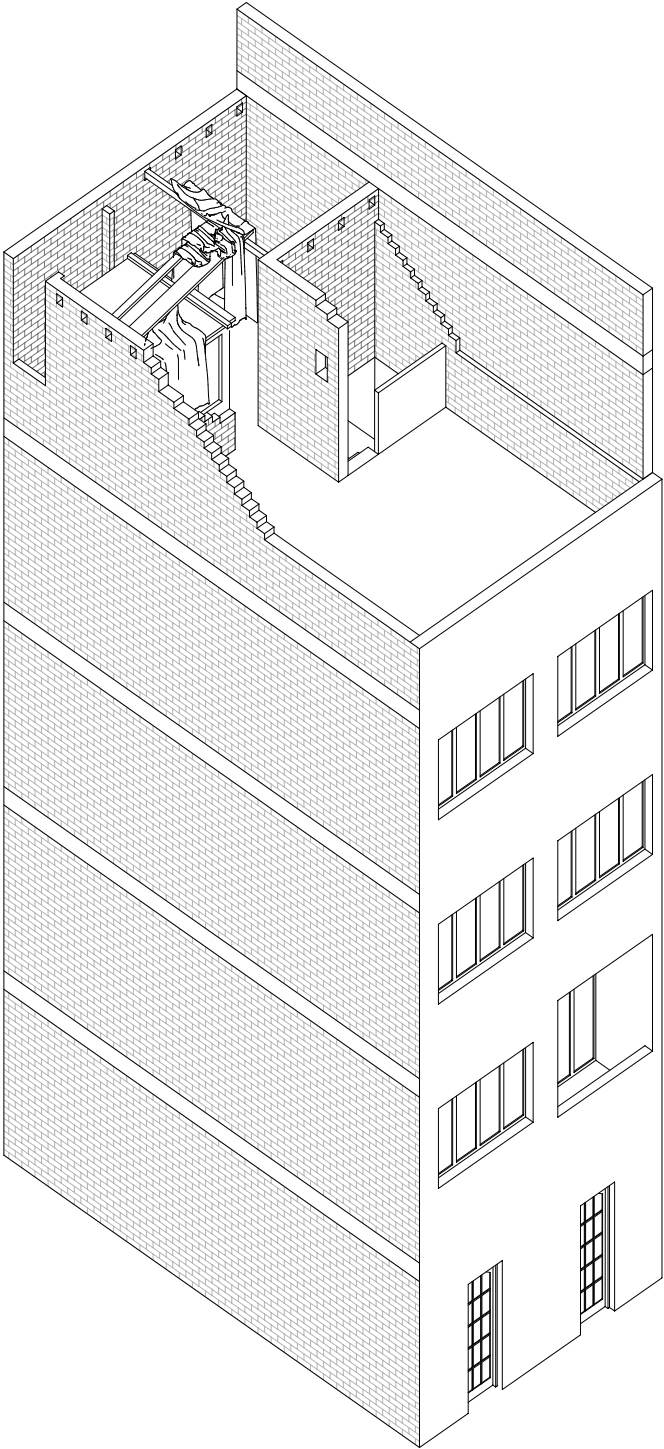
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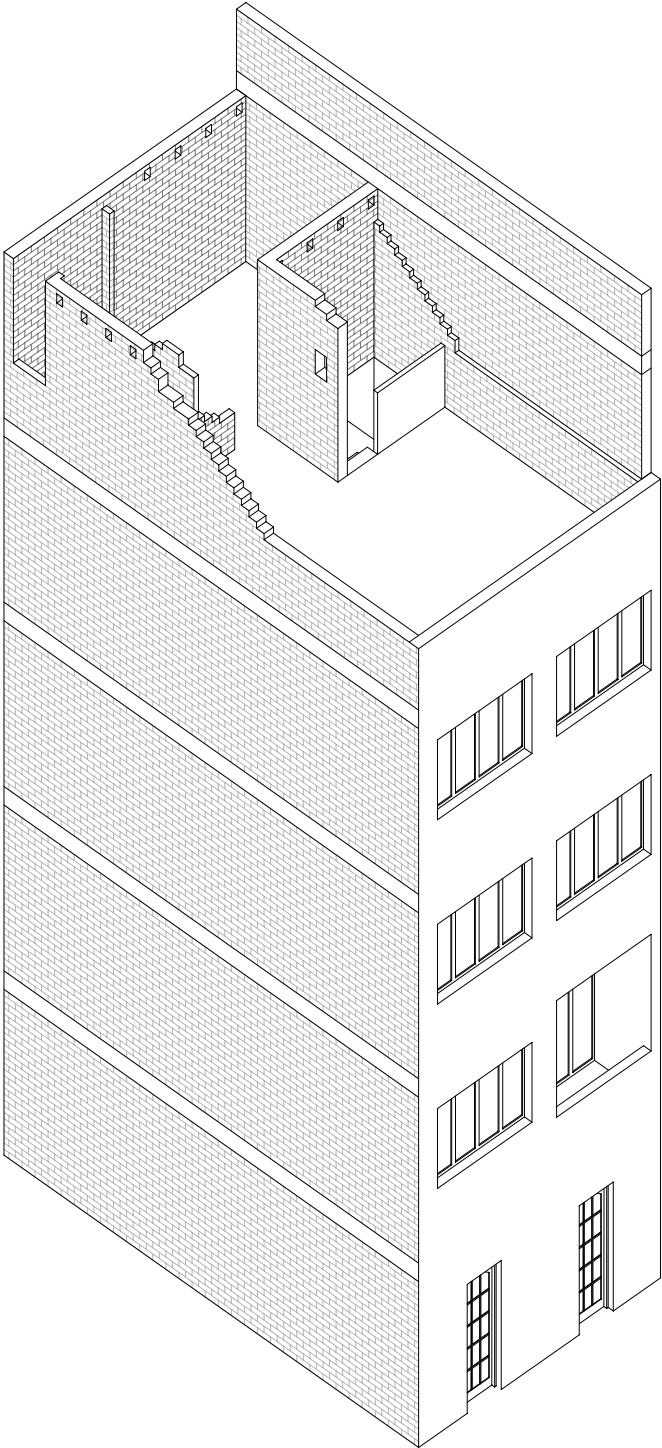


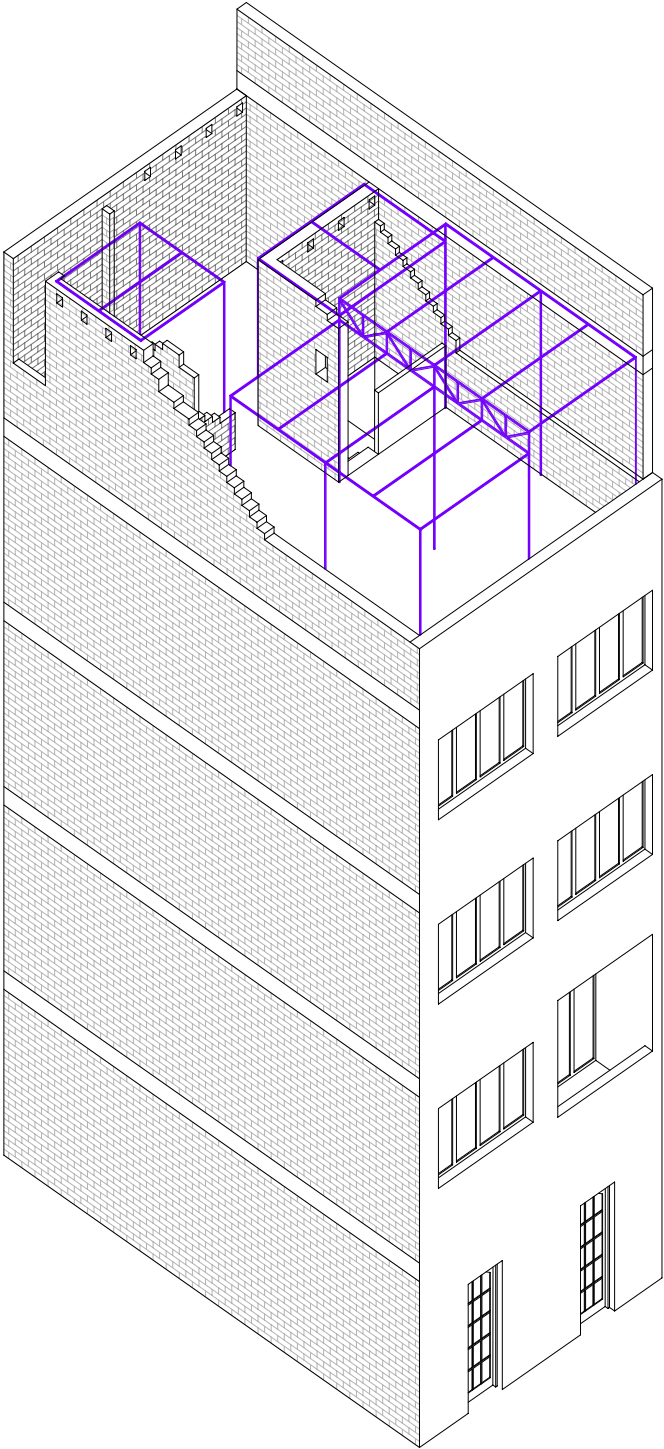
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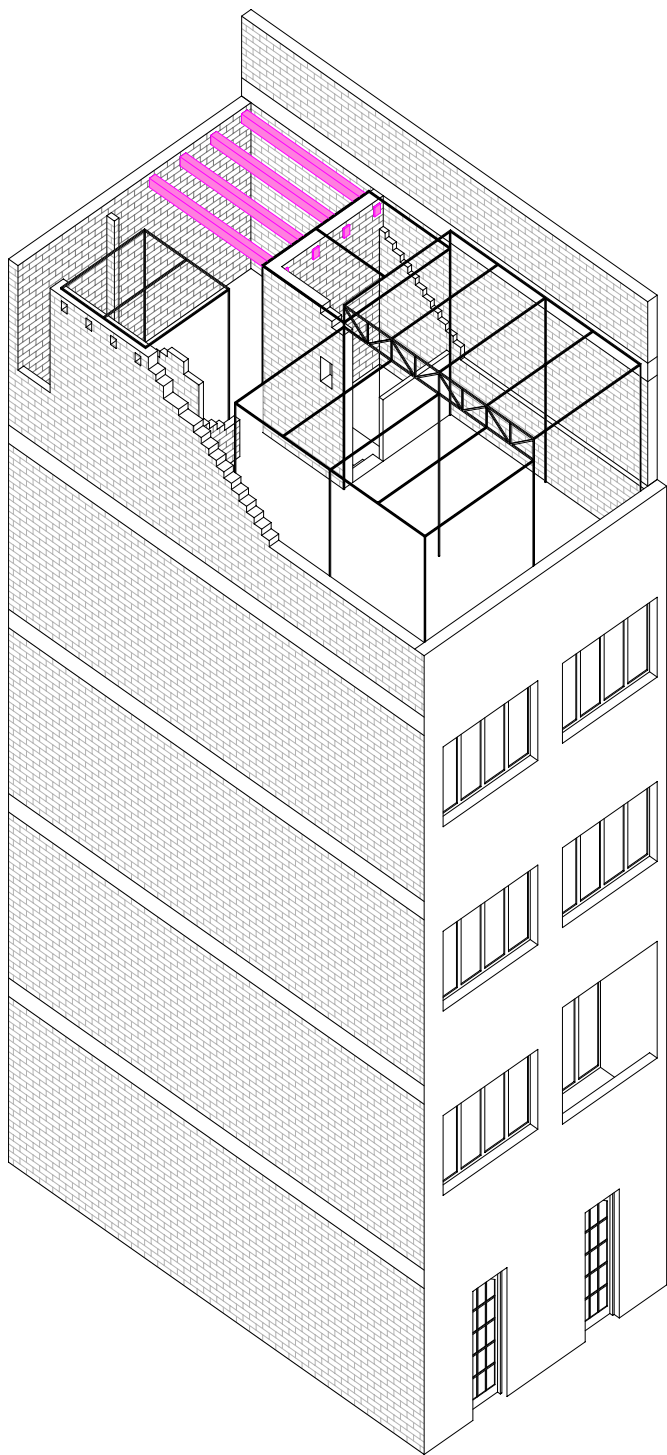


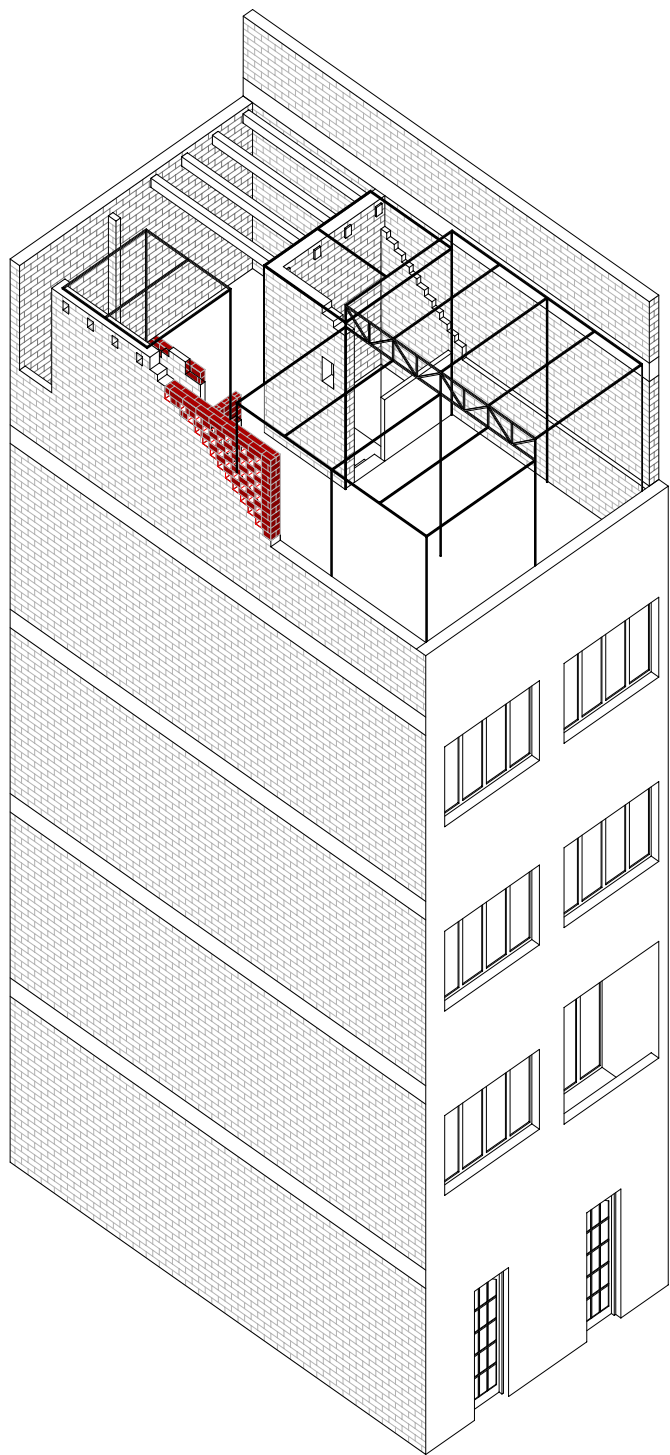
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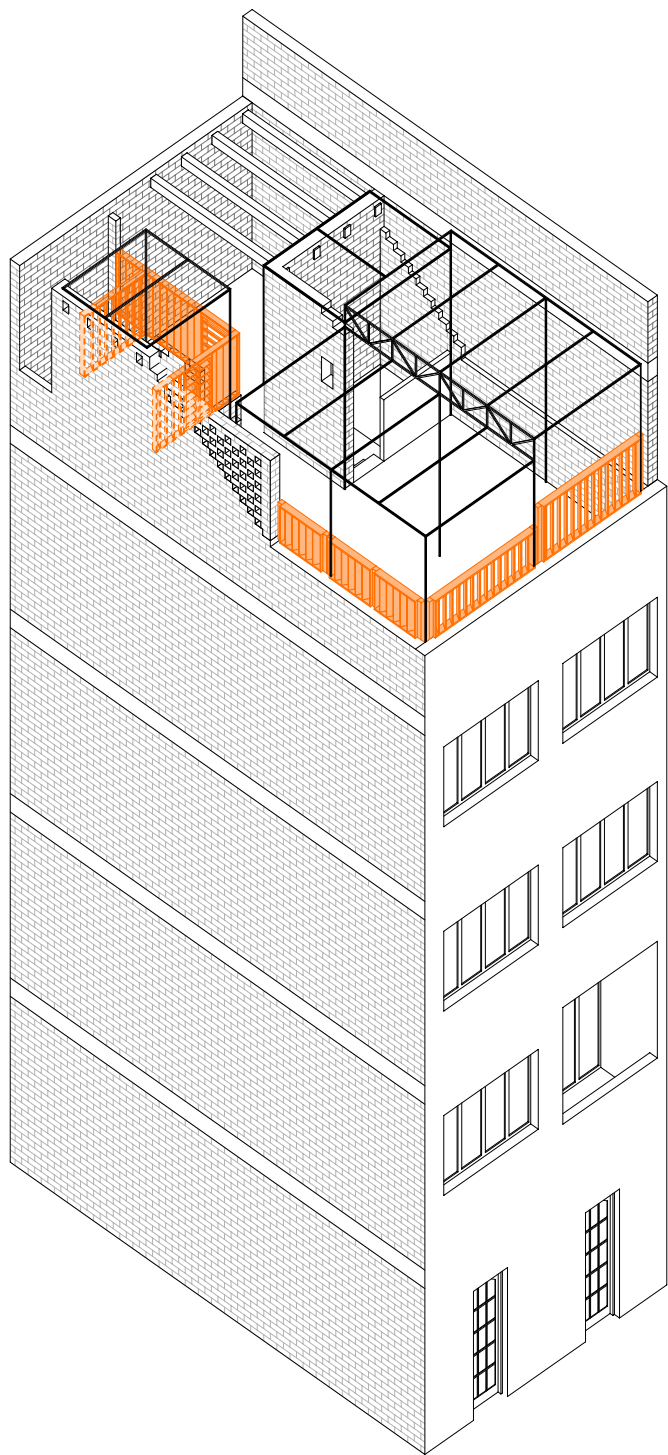


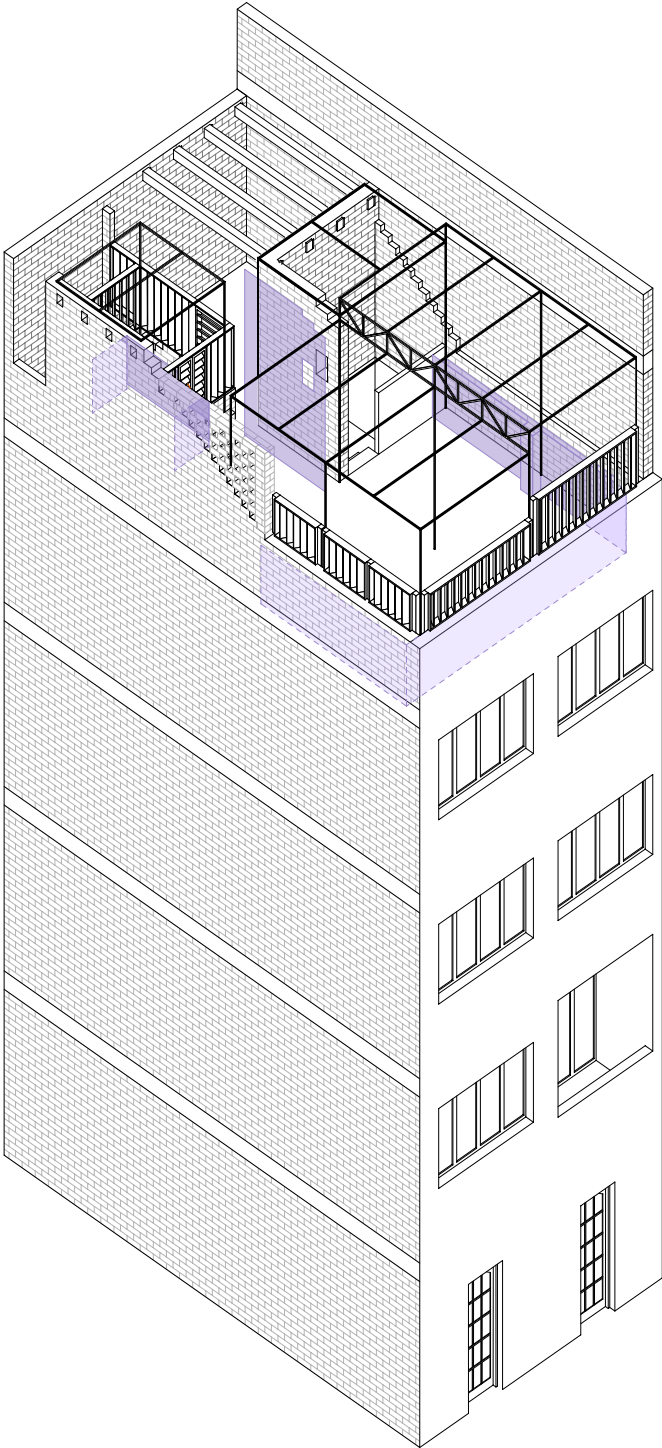


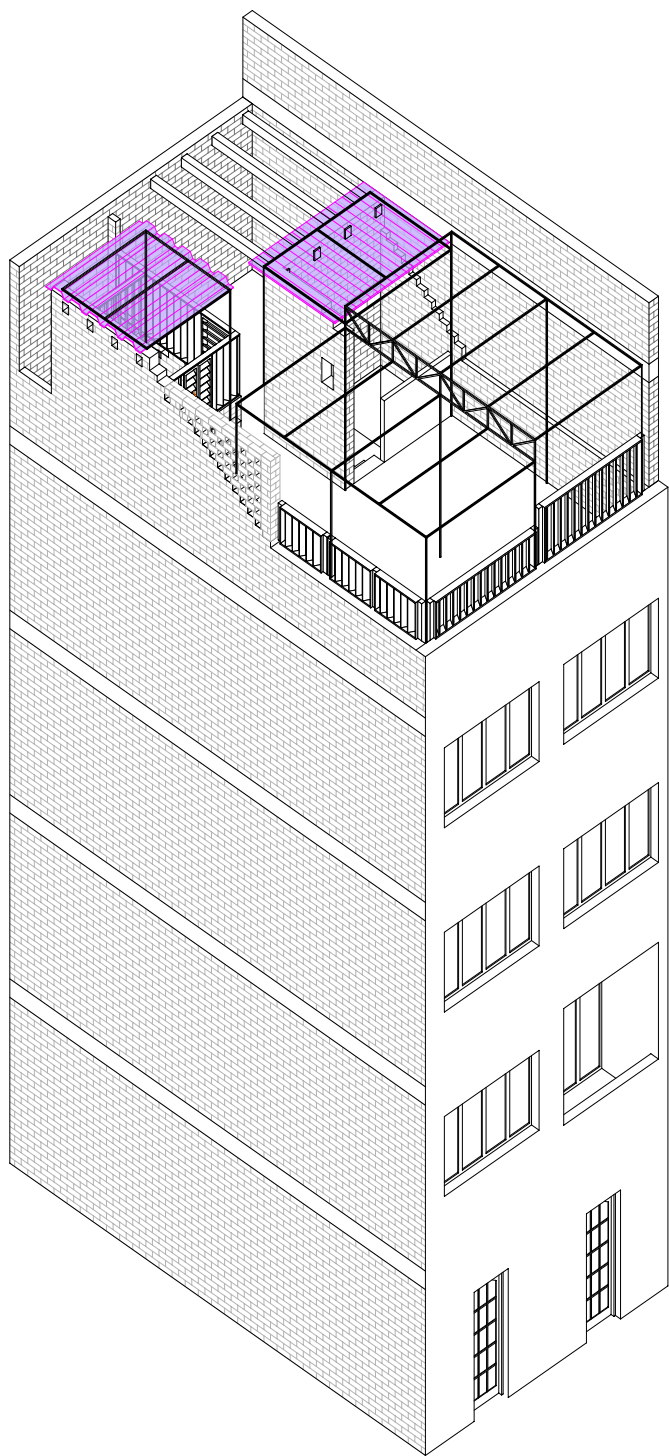


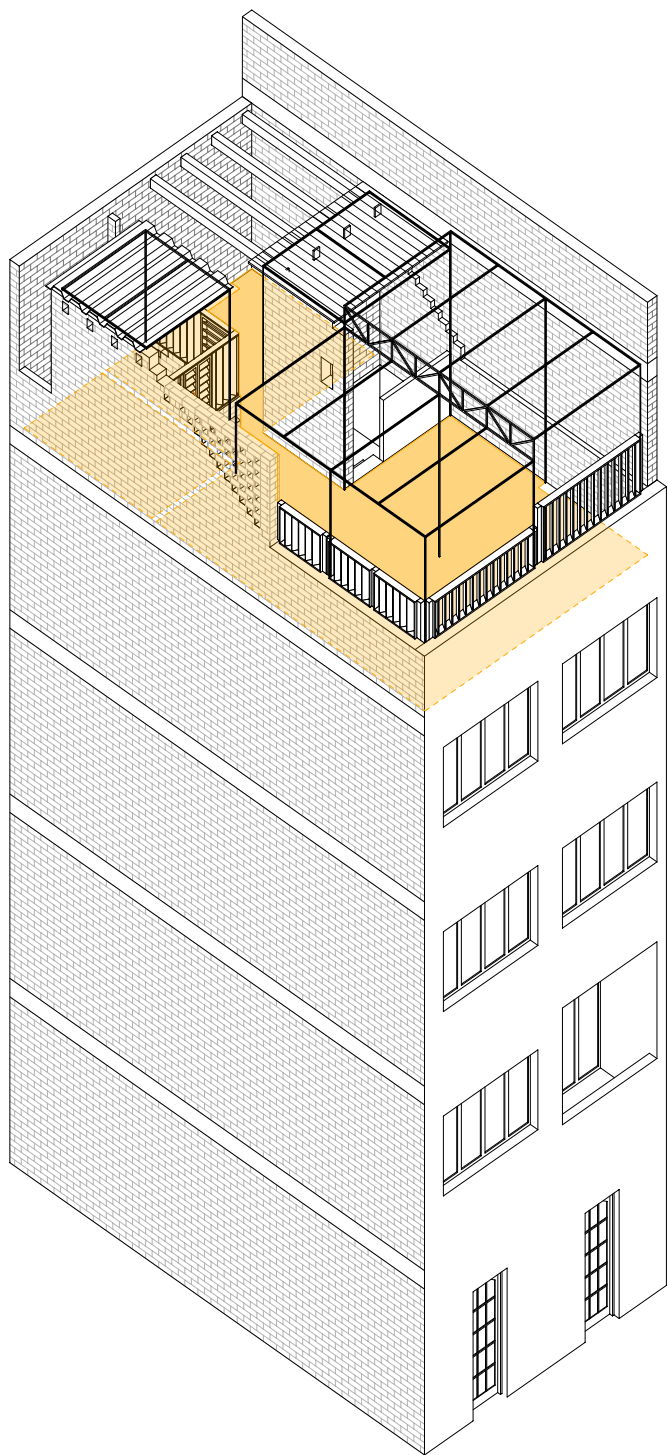


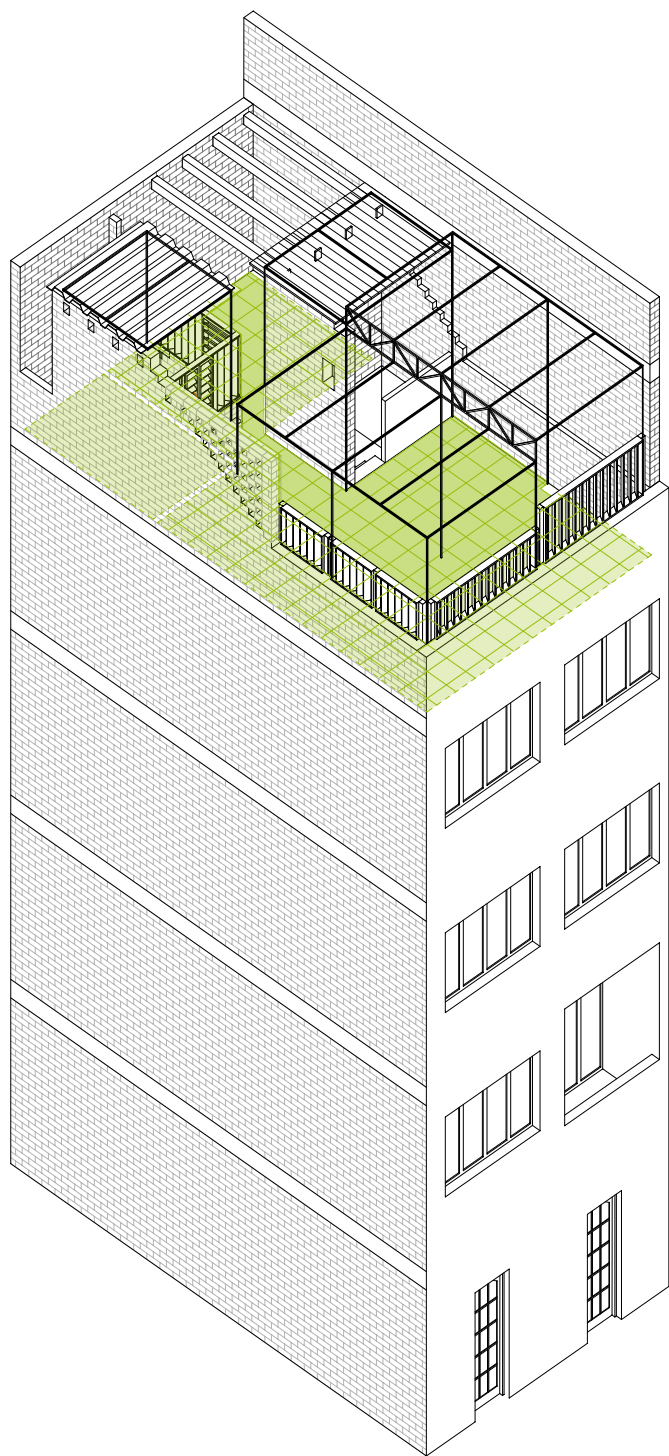


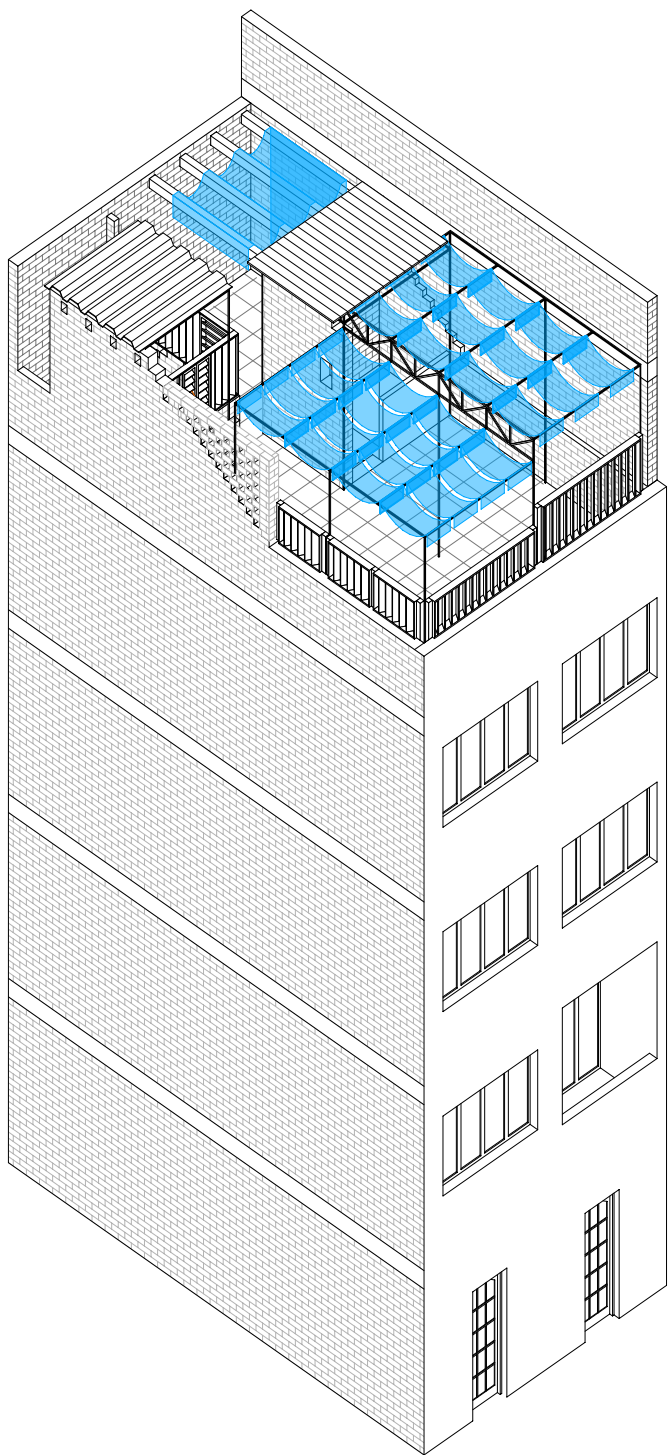












Berlin Workshop

Dec 5th to 8th

Phase III



Day 1: On the first day, students from Cairo visited TU Berlin. The students and the organizers of the project presented their final outcomes to an open audience of around 50 people at TU Berlin.

Days 2 & 3: On the second and third days, the students visited BENN and organized workshops with refugees from an accommodation center. These workshops aimed to map the needs and challenges that refugees face in the city, fostering discussions on potential solutions.





Day 4: On the last day, students participated in city tours where they were presented with various urban typologies in Berlin.



Feedback from participants

Augustin

The Design-Build workshop in Cairo was a complex, wonderful and exhausting undertaking for me. With a group of people, all but one, strangers before we started, the week long intervention opened up countless ideas, questions and realizations to me. Mainly the discrepancy between planning and actually building our ideas with local partners revealed to me a new and quite dynamic take on agency in communal production.

Catalina

As someone that has struggled deeply and often with the density of theoretical approaches of architectural academia, design and build projects showed me there might still be a light flickering at the end of the educational tunnel, that it's not a profession I was mistaken about, but rather a profession simply not shown to me in the right kind of light. Having chosen architecture for its promises of hands-on, of diversity, interdisciplinarity and opportunity to interact with people from varied walks of life, it was only through my part-taking in design and build projects that I felt these promises fulfilled.

Simten

This workshop was the second design-build workshop I participated in since I started studying urban design. Both of these experiences pushed me to think on how I can position myself as an architect and motivated me to acknowledge myself as a political being. In Cairo I learned that limited resources require reproducing knowledge, extending capacities and being open to change plans when necessary.

Youssef

The approach revolutionises problem solving in real life scenarios, working with budgeting and aiming to provide value for refugees that will benefit for a long term. As an architect it's the most realistic approach to actually feeling the gist of the job. The humane aspect of connecting with other workers for the same goals and having a very tight deadline and purpose feels challenging in an intriguing way. The good planning and horizontal approach to creating architectural work democratises the work.

Salma

As a hindsight reflection on the design-build workshop as an educational strategy, and putting aside the subsequent euphoric state in which a fast-paced short-term project actually transpires into a physical manifestation, I think what creates a learning leap is experiencing the human interactions that arise within this minuscule 'construction site.' Feeling, and consequently reacting, to the spectrum of emotions and (both the real and the perceived) power dynamics is what transforms pedagogy from a dry, experimental, 'let's plan in the sterile studio' setting, into a grounded setting with all its shortcomings and chaos, but also its rewarding-and highly educative attributes.

Panos

I believe Design-Build approach to be a highly valuable educational experience. Its value lays in the condensation of two complex processes – designing and building – while placing the participants under a time restricted schedule. This urgency forces people to forego all the unnecessary steps and doubts while focusing only on the most important points of the process. Moreover, collaboration is fostered organically through the common sense of urgency and participants tend to adopt the role that suits them the most. Such processes can become quite messy, and what the participants are left with after the completion is an experience that can be critically analysed further on and selectively applied on their own future practice.

Jair

As urban planning students, we rarely have the chance to see our ideas materialize. This experience in Cairo challenged us to go beyond designing on paper and engage with the realities of construction, teamwork, and community involvement. It was not just about “What” and “Where” but also “How” and “With whom.” Being part of a multidisciplinary team, working alongside carpenters, electricians, teachers, and local residents taught me that collaboration, adaptability, and empathy are just as crucial as technical skills. This hands-on approach transformed the way I see urban planning: not just as a profession but as a collective process where people and places shape each other. We designed and built together with a community that speaks, decides, debates and, above all, has a name, a face, interests, and aspirations.

Farah

Joining the Winter School program with TU Berlin was an incredible opportunity for me to learn more about both the university and the city. Exploring the design studios at TU Berlin was really interesting as their approach differed from ours in Egypt, offering an insightful learning experience. An eye-opening experience was visiting a housing complex of refugees in Marzahn. Listening to people’s stories, reflecting on their wants and needs, and searching ways to suffice them was such a privilege. Also, it was a delight to have spent the day with the children there despite the language barrier sometimes. Lastly, I was grateful to present, alongside my colleagues, the work we had collaborated on with the TU Berlin students in Egypt. Showcasing our design processes and shared experiences, highlighted the importance of collaboration and cross cultural learning which help us reach innovative design solutions.

Jana El-Hini

The experience broadened my perspective, exposing me to a range of new endeavors- from the chance of partaking in participatory design through brainstorming, designing, and communicating with locals to the hands-on realization of our project. The cross-cultural exchange that occurred between us, the students, as well as the locals throughout the duration of the design-build and all that followed proved to be an invaluable experience.