Fatimid Cairo: the transformation of an urban logic

Galal H. Galal-Edeen, BSc, BA(Arch), MSc(BSAD), MSc(AAS), PhD, MBCS
London Metropolitan University, Cairo University & Community Design Collaborative (Halim), Cairo.

History

Cairo, the largest metropolis in Africa, started life in 969 C.E. as a settlement of the caliphate of Fatimid Egypt, founded by Sayf al-Din al-Mansur. The settlement first grew around the palace of the Fatimid caliph Al-Mansur, who made it the new capital of the Fatimid Empire. The original plan by Sayf al-Din al-Mansur provided a grid-like structure for the city, which was built over many ages and is still visible today. The city has evolved, changing its function and style over the centuries. Synthesis analysis is a surprise...

First plan

As we move from the local to the global levels of integration analysis, there is a significant shift in the value of different axes. This behaviour is not accounted for by Symmetry measure, which is simply a measure of correlation between local and global integration values for some layout. Symmetry does not account for the large distance between major integrator that act locally, and those that act globally. We coined the term “Congruence” as a measure of the likelihood that the same lines that are strong integrators at the global level are also strong integrators at the local level. This first plan of Fatimid Cairo displays low local global integrator congruence.

Fatimid Cairo in 1097

Again, a new degree of “congruence” that is not accounted for by intersecting the correlation between Local and Global Integration values, for some form, zero in much wider scope of integration values between the local and the global levels than for the rest.

Fatimid Cairo in 1919

Local integration distribution: moves from bias to low values to a greater variety of values across the layout. The town is becoming more intelligible to strangers.