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certain bounds of regularity and fitness, cannot guarantee the engagement of the community in the sustenance, health, and goodness of the environment.

It is within the bounds of these three observations that my basic hypothesis is formulated as follows:

- Up until recently, over two thirds of the world's population lived in communities where the production of the environment was, until recently, regulated by such production and building rituals.
- Today, with few exceptions, the life and environment of these communities are regulated by an imposed, top-down process of planning and production which draws its principles from sources alien to the community and its cultures. The result is apathy, underdevelopment, and immense waste and destruction of the environment and its resources.
- Any environmental plan in context of these developing communities should be taken as an opportunity to re-establish the relation between the culture and the production of its environment. The responsibility of the architect in any public project in this context is to re-establish that relation; hence, the fundamental task of architecture is to try to understand local life, and search for the mechanisms that bridge the gap between technology and society, the material and spiritual, and become once more vital to communities in the process of the rejuvenation of their identities. Architecture should not be used as a tool to disenfranchise and control communities into neat tidy plots, but should render building as an activity for the rejuvenation and empowerment of communities. The role of the architect and his responsibility should be to understand and interpret culture, and change society through his architecture.

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can uncover, re-establish, and perhaps reseal the gulf or the rupture caused by modernity and industrialisation, and reaffirm the culture of the that community and the production and sustenance of its environment. It is in this context that I describe in the following part an account of the creation of the Cultural Park for Children.

II: The Cultural Park for Children

The Children's Cultural Park is located in the heart of the Sayeda Zeinab district of Cairo. Although it is one of the oldest, most densely populated, and poorly maintained quarters in Cairo, it is also one of the most vibrant and lively. Named after Prophet Mohammed's granddaughter, the Sayeda Zeinab community draws strength and pride from its reservoir of history. No more than a few hundred yards from the park are the Ibn Tulun and Sayeda Zeinab mosques built during the Tulunid era. Both are among the many great buildings in the area that embody, in form, some of the power, vitality, and meaning of the community. This vitality has for centuries been annually replenished with the *moulid*, a remembrance festival for Sayeda Zeinab. During the weeklong festivities, the identity of the community is reaffirmed and regenerated through scores of ritual as well as productive acts.

The site of the park itself was built upon the remnants of an older, dilapidated garden called Al-Hod Al-Marsoud which dates back to the Mamluk period. A virtual wasteland in the midst of a concrete jungle, the garden was monopolised by street gangs and generated a sense of danger in the area, alienating the community and contributing to the general state of decay of the physical environment. Local children would occasionally gather to play but even their activity was restricted to the borders of the park, rendering it more part of street life than to park life. Only during the Sayeda Zeinab *moulid* celebration was the garden reclaimed by the community, bringing people and activities momentarily back into the two-and-a-half-acre plot. It is this