



Not only did the design festival actively engage residents, but the construction process also brought together skilled craftsmen with architects as partners in the building process. At a time when the dominant mode of production places primacy on control and efficiency of management and costs, the use of craftsmen in the era of mechanisation sadly becomes obsolete. For this reason the use of stone represented not only a building material appropriate to the surrounding environment, but also a meeting point for carpenters, formworkers, steelworkers and surveyors, i.e., typical members of a contracting crew with traditional craftsmen.

A full-scale model was constructed for each element, with the craftsmen present to advise on the materials and techniques involved. These models were then used as patterns for carving stone and building vaults and arches. This made it possible to combine the skill of the stonemason and his instinctive knowledge of geometry and measurement with the technician's ability to work from written instructions and drawings. The combination also made it possible to innovate. Craftsmen were able to regain lost skills and build upon their knowledge base, thereby reducing the gap between their skill and knowl-

A SHADED COURTYARD AREA WITHIN THE PARK, COMBINES BOTH ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN, ENGAGING RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.



THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL FOR CHILDREN, HELD IN CAIRO EVERY NOVEMBER, WAS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE COMMUNITY INTEREST IN THE CHILDREN'S CULTURAL PARK PROJECT.

edge, while technicians were able to add advanced skills to their ordinary tasks of steel reinforcement and water proofing.

The Children's Cultural Park in Sayeda Zeinab represented an experiment to do away with the artificial separation between the steps of conception and design and those of execution. In order to allow the community's identity to emerge in the park, a break had to occur in the control normally exercised by conventional architectural practices. Mechanisms were created that allowed the process of building to occur incrementally or gradually, allowing for change and adjustments that can mesh the aspirations of a community with the potential provided by their surrounding environment.

It has been four years since the park was finally completed and it remains to be seen if the experiment is durable and replicable. The ultimate test of any community development project is the degree to which its targeted beneficiaries claim the project as their own.

In our case, the surrounding community became vibrant with activities. Residents upgraded their homes, street weddings and festivals became once again a feature of the community. For two years they