

celebrated the impact of the park in improving their environment. But something went wrong. The euphoria did not last. Official neglect by local authorities and the lack of institutional mechanisms at the community level to make up for this neglect led to the gradual deterioration of the street. With no regular maintenance, elements like street lighting and regular garbage collection disappeared.

As a result, the area once again appeared deserted and invited acts of vandalism from outside the area against the park. Drugs and prostitution, after being driven away for two years, reclaimed the territory. The proposed studios, shops, and community cafe along the side street, which were initially met with the much enthusiasm, failed to materialise due to government bureaucracy and now their establishment is looked on with scepticism and doubt.

In response to formal mismanagement and the general sense of apathy in the community, some members chartered a community-based organisation called the Abu Dahab Street Association to address these problems. Since its establishment earlier this year, the association has helped improve security in the area by lighting the streets once again and ensuring that they remain so. Garbage is now regularly collected. Income-generating projects were initiated along the street. Although it still remains to be seen the extent to which they can mobilise the community in general to lobby officials for a wider role in the park and the operationalisation of the park's studios, shops and community cafe, initial results are promising. All these are positive indications of a community trying to have a bigger say in the nature of their surrounding urban environment and make the impact of the park in upgrading the area sustainable.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Abdel Halim, Halim. 1983. "El-Houd El-Massoud." *Mimar* 8, April-June 1983: 30-33
2. Abdelhalim, A. I. 1988. "A Ceremonial Approach to Community Building" In *Theories and Principles of Design in the Architecture of Islamic Societies*, 139-148. Sevckenko Margaret (ed.). Cambridge, Massachusetts: Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture

