

The Story of Makanuna

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Abstract

“Welcome to ‘Makanuna’, our place ... home of our inner spirit
**A trove of things crafted by our hands ... is waiting for you to find
inside this space.**” Malak Alaa Eldeen, 2023

Makanuna Al-Khalifa was a participatory placemaking project empowering adolescents in al-Khalifa neighbourhood in historic Cairo to redesign their local public spaces. Through 2021-2022 workshops, around 20 youth aged 13-18, including Malak Alaa Aldeen, upcycled solid and organic waste into outdoor furniture, games, and compost for al-Khalifa Park. A key output was Malak’s poem “The Story of Makanuna” with illustrations by her sister Fatma Alaa Eldeen, also a workshop participant. In vivid verses, the 17-year-old welcomes readers to “Makanuna” - Arabic for “Our Space” - home to their creativity and handcrafted items. She describes making a gazebo “formed from three triangles” of repurposed plastic bottles and rope, illuminated to resemble “a rainbow”, delighting all who see it. Inspired, they crafted five more lighting units “with bold colours and innocent hands.”

The poem conveys their determined spirit driving this unique space’s creation through hard work “from our plans.” Malak radiates pride in resourceful designs like a recycling bin filled with bottles containing natural materials from the park. Her closing words capture their ownership: “Here is our place and our story. So, what do you think of our idea in all its glory?”

Empowering youth to transform underutilized areas fostered creativity, environmental stewardship and belonging. Building on this, Malak, Fatma and other core team members launched “Makanuna Initiative” to pursue placemaking further. Malak now voices this youth-led initiative’s junior team, aiming to inspire wider involvement.

Malak’s poem and Fatma’s illustrations powerfully capture their sustainable accomplishments. This highlights the initiative’s origins in the Al-Khalifa workshops through adolescent participants who helped catalyse Makanuna’s growth from a local project into a youth-led movement.

Keywords: Historic Cairo, Makanuna, urban regeneration, waste upcycling, youth-led movement

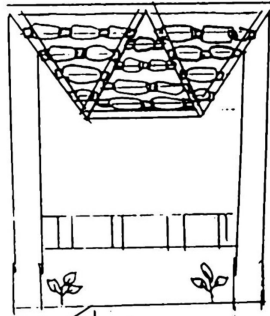
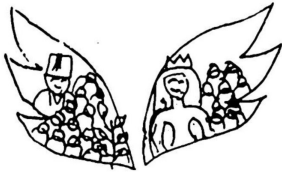
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أهلا بيكم في مكاننا
الساكن وجداننا
جوه مكاننا العالي علينا
حجات كتير من صنع ايدينا
- زمان قتلتمكم -
أزازتتين وحبال
- نعمل برجولة ملهأش مثال
آدي برجولة ولا قوس قزح
هتتشوقها هتطيرم الفرخ
متكونة من تلت مثلثات
أزايها منورة كلها ألوانات
بصى هناك . شايغ النور
دي مثلثاتنا لغيت دور
ألوان بريئة بأيدين جريئة. أنكوت
وحجات اضاعة. متصممه ومثلثات
ومتثلثنا التقى شغال
عملنا سلة مريوطه بأحبال
- جوا أزايين صنلنا -
جزد كبير من جنيننا
ورق شجر رمل وظلت
وهي دي فكرتنا
والكومبوست وتدفي الارض
كبر زرعا بالطول والرض
آدي مكاننا وآدي حياتنا
ايه رأيكويق ف فكرتنا
قصية ملك علاء
رسومات فاطمة علاء



The Story of Makanuna

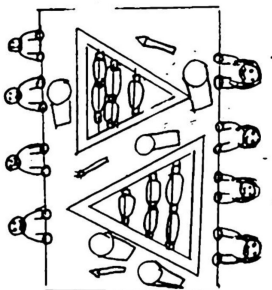


Welcome to 'Makanuna', our place -
home of our inner spirit
A trove of things crafted by our hands
is waiting for you to find inside this space.

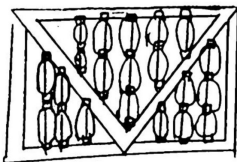
Once I told you,
Make a gazebo unlike any other
with two bottles and a rope passing through:
Here is gazebo - or is it a rainbow?

When you see it, you'll jump for happiness,
Formed from three triangles,
Its coloured bottles are illuminated in excess.

Look there! Do you see the light?
These are our triangles shinning with all their might.



With bold colours and innocent hands,
lighting units came together from triangles.
We worked hard from our plans:
We made a chain tied with rope.
Inside our bottles,
a big part of our garden:
tree leaves, sand, and pebbles,



This is our idea,
And compost in the ground,
Our planting covering all the land.
Here is our place and here is our story:
So what do you think of our idea in all its glory?



Figure 1. Malak & Fatima checking compost resulted from their organic waste.
Credits: 2022 Makanuna al-Khalifa



Figure 2. Mekanuna team with some of the 1st workshop prototypes. Credits: 2021 Mekanuna al-Khalifa



Figure 3. Malak with her colleague Menna on the bottles for design for one of the light units. Credits: 2022 Mekanuna al-Khalifa



Figure 4. Mekanuna participants, implementation workshop final day.
Credits: 2022 Mekanuna al-Khalifa



Acknowledgement

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