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Now we can have a nice landscape and a green area close to where we live. I love how we can put our ideas into the game and see them come to reality.

Ziad
12 year old workshop participant

"

Brainstorming, Al Khalifa © UN-Habitat

Al-Khalifa, located in the heritage site of Cairo, is one of Cairo's densest neighbourhoods, lacking access to basic urban services, especially public space. UN-Habitat partnered with Cairo Governate and Megawra, an architectural hub for young students and architects, to convert a 3,000 m2 open space in an area of Al-Khalifa, currently used as a garbage dump, into a heritage and environment park for the use of the residents of the neighbourhood.

In August 2017, UN-Habitat and partners organised the first ever Minecraft community participation process in Egypt. About 20 Khalifa young men and women participated in a three-day co-design workshop to produce three-dimensional Minecraft ideas for improving the space. "This is

the first Minecraft workshop to be held in Egypt" said Safa Ashoub, Public space expert at UN-Habitat regional office for Arab States, "we are hoping to build the capacities of adolescents to be able to understand and design their public spaces and to utilise this useful tool for their own development".

The workshop started with an introduction to the principles of public space design, a discussion on the importance of community engagement, and what residents from Khalifa like and dislike about their area. Afterwards, participants were divided into teams and built their visions of the public space utilising Minecraft.

During the workshop, it was interesting to see the progress of the

ideas produced by participants. On the first day they were first interested in exploring the features of the game, but then quickly moved on to building more concrete ideas about what they want to see in their area. By the end of the workshop participants could reflect the principles of good public space they had learned in the workshop by constructing items like street lights, pavements and community centers.

On the last day of the workshop, participants presented their designs to stakeholders and their ideas were noted and prioritized. Afterwards a final model combining the agreed ideas was produced and will be part of the design phase of the final public space.

Al Khalifa, Egypt © UN-Habitat