

# City profile: Cairo<sup>1</sup>

## I. General information (CPH)

Cairo’s agglomeration, also named Greater Cairo Region (GCR), is divided into three governorates (Cairo on the East of the Nile, Giza on the West of the Nile, Qalyubia on the North), but it has no proper administrative entity (see IV. Actors of urbanization and public policies). Its area is about 1709 km<sup>2</sup> and its population is growing quickly since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due to natural population growth and to massive rural to urban migrations, firstly linked to the industrialization of the economy in the 1960s.

Year	Population
1947	3 million
1976	8 million
1986	11 million
2006	More than 16 million
2021	20 to 22 million

Fig. 1: Demographic growth of GCR.  
Credits: Panetta 2019, Madoeuf 2020.

Administrative divisions in Greater Cairo in 2006

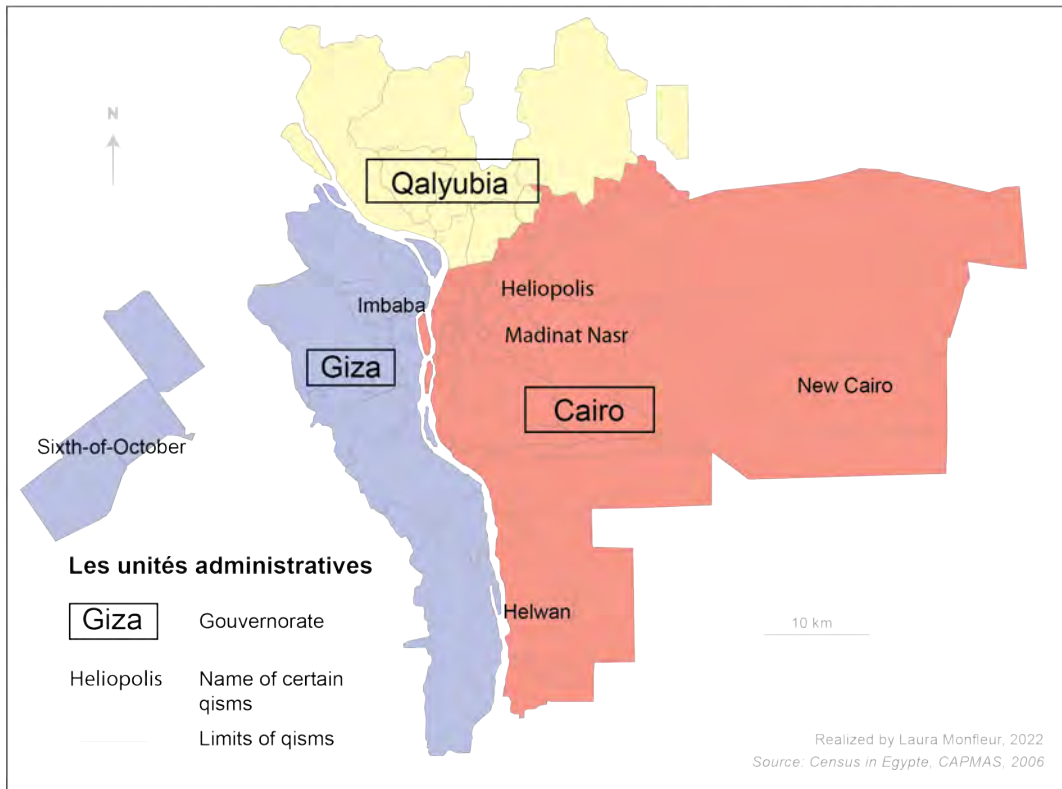


Fig. 2: Administrative divisions in Cairo in 2006. Credits: Monfleur, 2022.

<sup>1</sup> This profile does not cover several topics such as social housing, social services and policies. Examples are given as illustrative but do not account for a full description. We also want to underline that this essay has not been revised yet by our colleague D. Wahdan

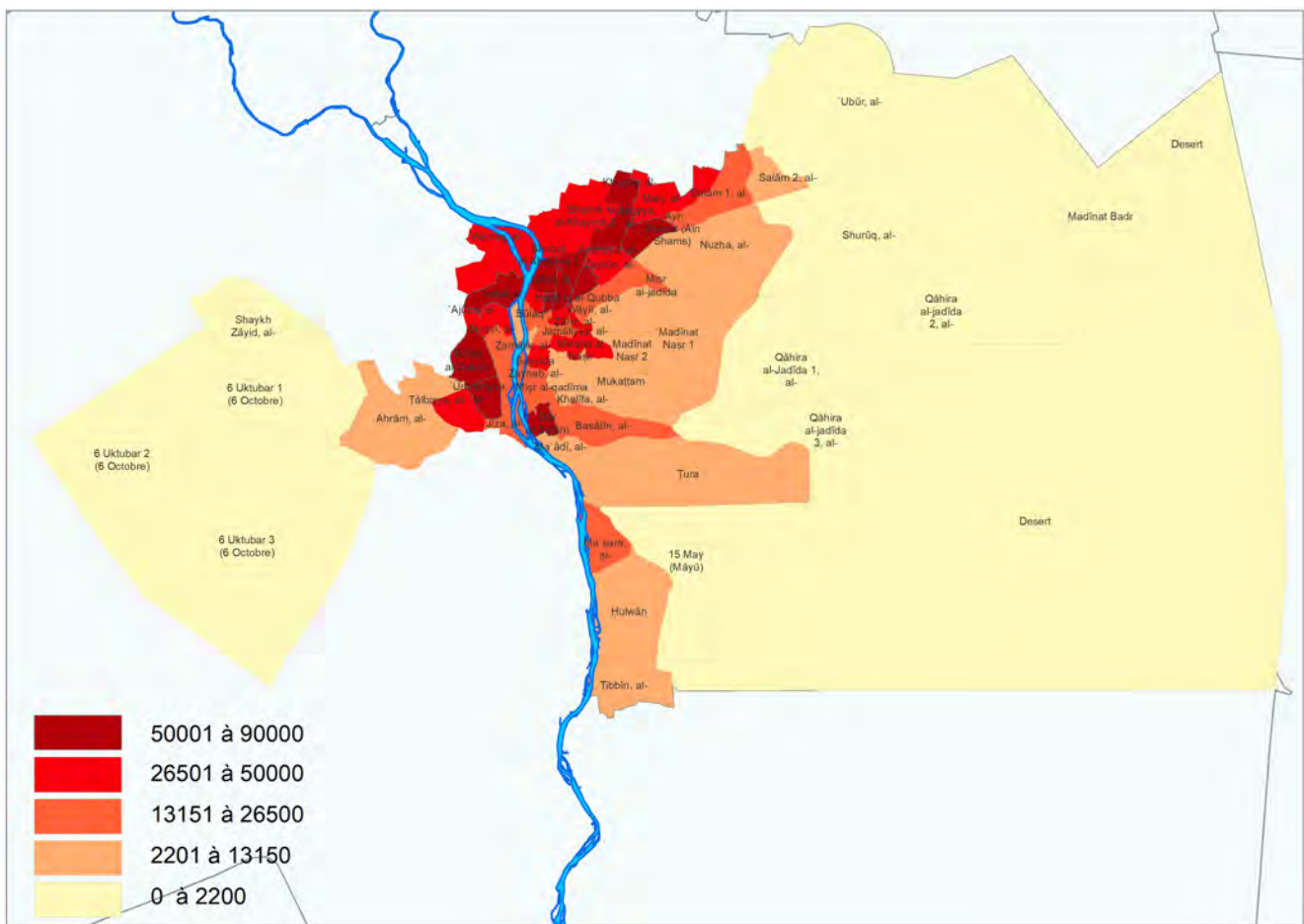


Fig. 3: Densities per qism in 2006 (inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>). Credits: Bayoumi, Deboulet, 2020.

The Egyptian capital is concentrating the majority of political, economic and cultural institutions and activities of the country:

- most of the Egyptian and international public institutions are located in Greater Cairo (Arab League, ministries...). The inner city had also a very central role in the 2011 Revolution (sit-in on Tahrir square), even if these public institutions are being progressively displaced to the New Administrative Capital (see III.).

- GCR concentrates most of the economic activities of the country: half of the country jobs, two thirds of the civil servants, produces more than half of the GDP, most of the foreign investments, most of the big companies' headquarters... (Madoeuf 2020). The agglomeration was directly affected by the industrialization policies under Gamal Abdel Nasser, then by the economic liberalization operated by the president Anwar Al Sadate in the 1970s (Infitah). Despite the numerous economic reforms adopted since the 1980s, influenced by the recommendations of international financial institutions (World Bank, IMF), Cairo has still a quite weak economic power, compared to other world cities (58<sup>th</sup> on the Global and World Cities ranking in 2018<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> According to the British university of Loughborough. The ranking measures the city's insertion in the network of world cities, relying on the number and activities of major international service companies.

- eventually, the majority of cultural institutions and equipment are located in the Greater Cairo, whose cultural influence is regional. The Noble Prize of Naguib Mahfouz (1988) even gave Cairo an international dimension on the cultural scene. His works are directly related to Cairo historical neighborhoods, classified as Unesco World Heritage in 1979 (Fustat, Ibn Tulun mosk, Citadel area, Fatimid nucleus of Cairo, Mausoleum of Imam al-Shafi'i, As-Sayyidah Nafisah Necropolis, Qayitbay Necropolis). However, cultural activities in Cairo are now under lot of censorship and many writers and artists are working from abroad.

## **II. Urban history (CPH)**

The Nile Valley was the site of a series of capitals during the 5000 years of pharaonic civilization: Heliopolis (XXVII<sup>th</sup> century BC), Memphis (from 5000 to 2500 BC) (Madoeuf 2020). But the first capital foundation on the current site of Cairo is considered to be operated in 641 in Al Fustat, by 'Amr Ibn al-'As, an Arab military commander who relocated the capital from Alexandria. Afterwards, there was a series of cities foundations: al-'Askar by the Abbasids in 750 ; al-Qata'i' in 868 by Ahmad Ibn Tulun, a Turkish military leader ; and eventually, al-Qahirah, established by the Fatimids in 969 (see Abu Lughod, 1971).

This historic "pattern of new capital construction" (Panetta 2019) came to an end with Salah al Din, who opened a new urban era in 1171, when he helped the Fatimids to expel the Crusaders. This new era is characterized by a switch to a logic of internal development towards the East (Panetta 2019). This pattern prevailed until the French occupation (1798-1801), followed by Muhammad Ali's period (1805-1848) and Khedive Ismail reign (1863-1879). The Khedivial period is then considered as the birth of "modern Cairo": the now called Downtown area was built, under the influence of Baron Haussmann's architectural and planning ideas (wide boulevards, network of squares...).

From this central "modern" Cairo, the Egyptian capital has known several and progressive extensions to its periphery during the XX<sup>th</sup> century, a new city financed by the society of Empain's baron called Heliopolis in 1910, the first suburbs appearing in Zamalek or Maadi due, in the later case to some investment by private local and international entrepreneurs. The Nasserian period was marked by the construction of new industrial centers and low cost housing in order to deal with the overburdening of Cairo's infrastructures and public services.

From Sadate and Mubarak's period, Cairo was then mainly urbanized through a horizontal and vertical extension of the city, through the individual informal construction of dense urban neighborhoods, encroaching on peripheral private agricultural land. Besides this informal urbanization, Cairo is also extending for the last 15 years by the construction of compounds and gated communities on its outskirts, by individuals, small companies or big contractors.

As we will present it in the next part, the continuous policy of new cities built by the public actors at the East and West of the agglomeration is also a major driver of Cairene urbanization,

leading, among other issues, to an oversupply of private housing associated with a huge lack of affordable housing (Shawkat, 2020)

### III. Politics of urbanization

#### Master schemes and megaprojects (CPH)

Despite the creation of a Greater Cairo Region Master Scheme in 1969 (proposal to create four satellite cities in the outskirts of the capital) (El Shakry, 2006) and the New Town Policy of Anwar al Sadate (supposed to create 14 new settlements), the city extensions in the 1970s mainly relied on the development of so-called informal areas (*ashwa'iyat* in colloquial Arabic).

Several other master plans were adopted by the Egyptian government to control this informal urbanization and promote a modern and more organized city (Cairo 2050, Egypt 2030...), but they weren't really implemented. It is estimated that approximately 50–60% of Cairo's residents currently live in informal areas (Sims 2010) and this percentage has increased to 65% (Shawkat, 2020).

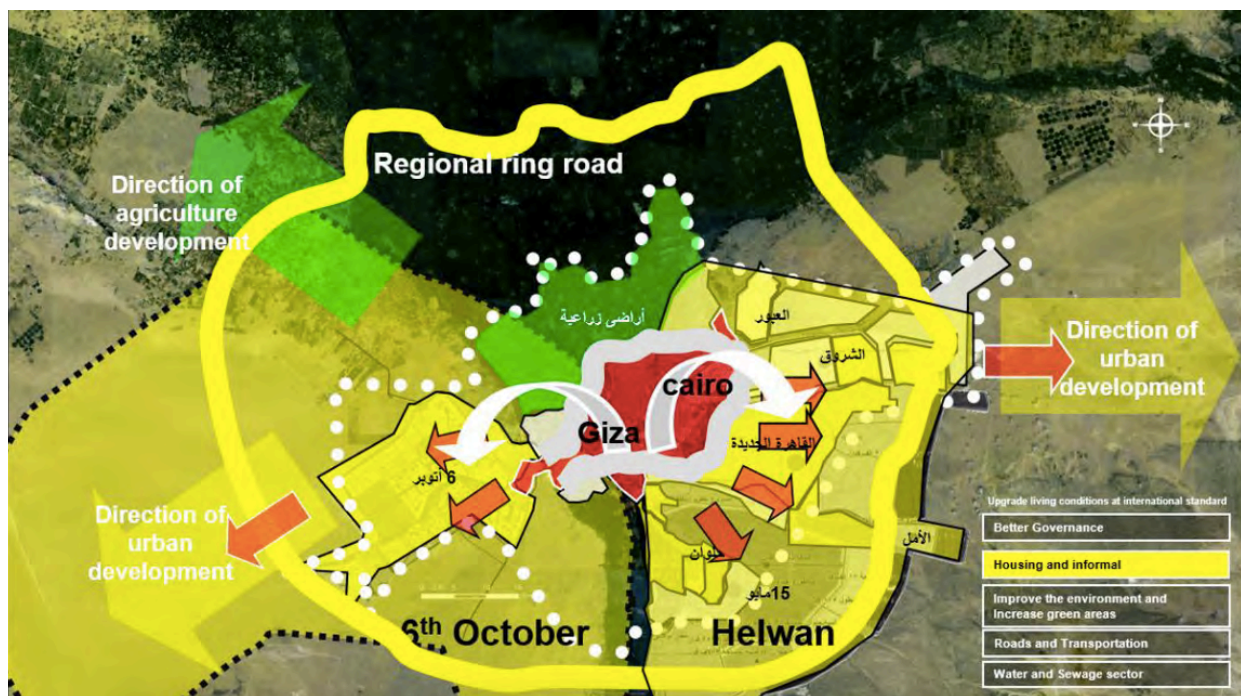


Fig. 4: One of the goals of the Cairo 2050 master plan: deconcentrating population.

Credits: cubeconsultats.org, 2010

Although the 2011 period was a moment of great informal and private expansion of the urban areas, the accession of Abdel Fatah Al Sissi to the presidency in 2013 was both in the continuity of the previous urban policies and the beginning of a new era in Cairo's urbanization as a capital. Apart from the new cities and the New administrative capital (see "Conquering the desert"), the 2013-2022 period is characterized by the implementation of a series of megaprojects, regarding cultural, touristic and infrastructural dimensions.

Along to massive infrastructural works (see below), the 5 recent years have experienced a tremendous increase in prestige projects aiming at changing the perception of the capital and encouraging a declining tourism. Thus, the creation of several cultural and touristic infrastructures are to be mentioned:

- the Great Egyptian Museum that is being built next to the Giza Pyramids, included in a more general complex of touristic infrastructures containing the Sphinx International Airport (supposed to be fully functional in July 2022). This museum, which will host Tutankhamon's treasure, but which opening date is delayed since 2020, is replacing the existing Egyptian Museum, located on Tahrir square.

- the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC), located in Al Fustat, was partially opened in 2017, and then officially inaugurated by Al Sissi in April 2021, with the moving of 22 mummies from the Egyptian Museum (on Tahrir Square). This inauguration was celebrated by a big ceremony (Pharaohs' Golden Parade), recalling the greatness of Egyptian pharaonic civilization, the convoy being received by Al Sissi in person at the museum. This ceremony was worldly broadcasted.

- and a series of other projects, such as the regeneration of Islamic Cairo, the refurbishment of downtown façades (presidential initiative "We are all one") and the architectural and cultural revitalization by private investors, the regeneration of Maspero triangle by Norman Foster architect's office, the Corniche renewal with a new promenade all along the banks of the Nile, the new planning of Tahrir square, etc.

Current characteristics of urban planning lie on several directions: conquering the desert by mega-projects and infrastructures, cleaning the old capital from informality, creating new political centers. They are tools for an international competition between cities, reinforcing an image of international, modern capital, at the expense of social and economic issues. These figures are not new, suggesting continuity between the different regimes (Othmane et Stadnicki, 2015) but yet the pace and the scope of the projects have accelerated, also suggesting a rupture according to other observers.

### **Conquering the desert: program of new cities and the new administrative capital (NAC) (LM)**

Since the 1970s, new cities have been major tools of urbanization in Egypt: 22 new cities were built between 1977 and 2000 (Barthel, 2011) and the current number approaches 50 in the country. In 1974, the Program of New Cities was launched and the New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA) was created in 1979. From the 1990s, with neoliberal policies under Hosni Mubarak and the structural adjustments policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, private real estate actors developed compounds – i.e. gated communities. Those new cities were and are presented as a rational and technical solution to the city center's problems: overpopulation, development of informal areas, pollution, congested traffic. The New Administrative Capital (NAC) could be considered in continuity of this program and of the conquest of the desert, as the government uses the same discourse of decongesting population, activities and traffic from city center.

Abdel Fattah el-Sissi announced the project of the NAC in March 2015 during the conference for the economic development in Sharm el-Sheikh. About 35-45 km away east Cairo,

this city should encompass 725km<sup>2</sup> for 6,5 to 7 million inhabitants, according to the official predictions. This mega-project will cost up to 45 billions of dollars. The master plan is divided in different districts which have a specific urban function: 21 residential districts, a Central Business District, a financial district, a governmental quarter, a district for embassies, a presidential palace. The NAC is built fast and has emblematic buildings such as the Iconic Tower, highest tower in Africa, one of the biggest churches and one of the biggest mosques of the Middle East. The NAC is supposed to show modernity and strength of the nation: monumental architecture, glass vertical structure, a monorail to link the NAC to the rest of Cairo. It's also a smart city where information about traffic and energy consumption will be centralized. Displacing the political and administrative center is not a new policy in Cairo as several attempts has been made in the past such Nasr City, Sadat City or Mustaqbal City under Mubarak.

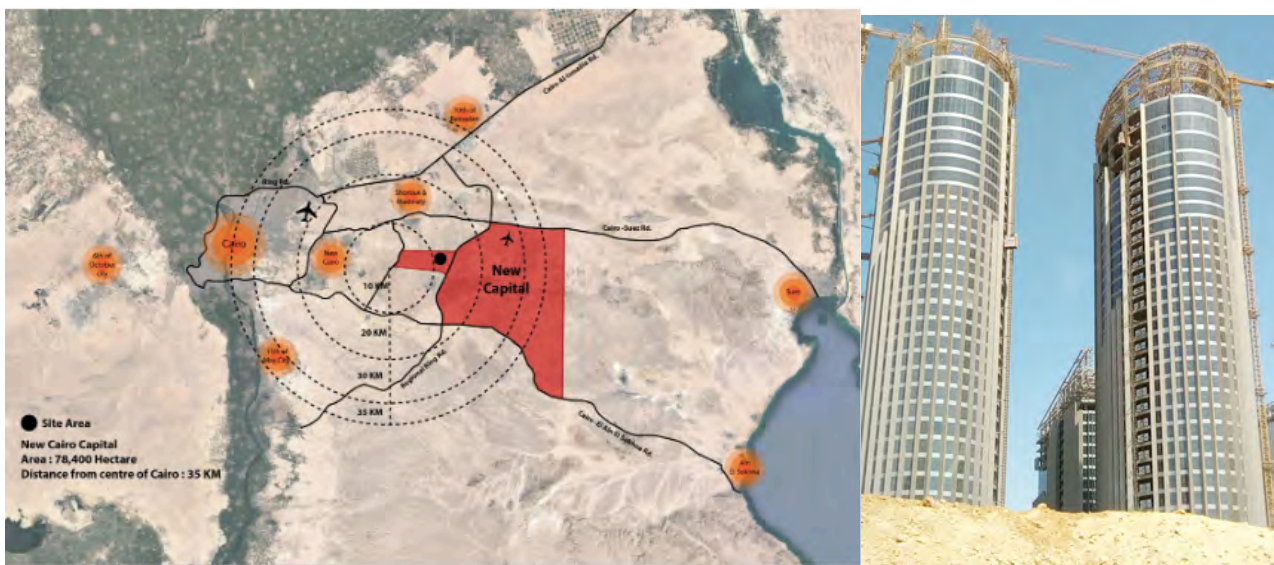


Fig. 5: a) Localization of the NAC. Credits: ACUD, 2017. b) Towers in construction in the Central Business District (CBD). Credits: Monfleur, 2021.

### **Remodeling the city through infrastructure and public spendings for large-scale projects (AD)**

One of the most explicit policies of the present regime is the building of many flyovers and road enlargements in the capital as well as the extension of the Ring Road. One of the obvious reason for this mega-infrastructure projects is the viability of the NAC that justifies by-passes and many other major infrastructure reaching the new capital with expressways. This never-ending expansion goes along with a constant enlargement of the capital perimeter: last June, 19 000 hectares were again added to the pre-defined perimeter of the NAC<sup>3</sup>.

This is causing a lot of demolitions in precarious neighborhoods and also social housing, using the arguments of easing the traffic and decongest the central neighborhoods of Cairo. In the last two years, this major infrastructure regeneration (or regeneration by infrastructure) has also seen some controversies sparking, mostly in protected neighborhoods, long unaffected by

<sup>3</sup> Al Borsa News, in Revue de Presse Ville, June 2022 (<http://cedej-eg.org/index.php/2022/06/29/revue-de-presse-ville-mobilites-environnement-juin-2022/>).

these attempts against the stability and compacity of the urban fabric: in Heliopolis (Masr al-Gedida) very strongly hit by the new roads and bridges when one artery was supposed to cut through the basilica; in Maadi when by-passes were supposed to replace the plants nurseries. With the exception of this resistance, all other projects have make their way.

To sum up in 2022, 20% of the national budget is allocated to the large-scale projects including the New capital whereas 10% are supposed to cover our public spending in education, health and housing, justice.



Fig. 6: Ard al Liwa new expressway and bridge. Credits: Deboulet, 2022

#### **IV. Actors of urbanization and of public policies (LM)**

##### **Central government's actors**

The president issues decree, appoints governors, launches national projects such as the NAC, Haya Karima, Kulena Wahid. He follows them by meeting with Armed Forces Engineering (cf. infra) and ministers. He appoints members of the board of national organizations such as the Sovereign Fund of Egypt (cf. infra). He has also a presidential advisor for Urban Planning.

The Prime Minister promotes decrees and coordinates the action of the ministries. Mustafa Madbuly, the current prime minister since 2018, is an important figure for urban issues as he is a former UN employee and the former Minister of Housing and Urban Utilities. Among ministries which have a role in urban development, strategic planning and heritage protection<sup>4</sup>:

---

<sup>4</sup> This chart is non exhaustive.

<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Roles</b>	<b>Sample of Projects</b>
Ministry of Finance	Budget, financial strategy in long term	Egypt Vision 2030
Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED)	In charge of regional planning (infrastructure, strategic planning) and economic development, according to the budget, the SDGs and best practices set by UN (cf. infra).	Egypt Vision 2030
Ministry of Housing Utilities and Urban Communities (MoH)	Urban development at the level of Greater Cairo, public utilities (sanitation, water) and infrastructure (road, bridges), supervising planning and social housing projects, developing informal areas and new cities.	Maspero, NAC, Mamsha ahl Masr, el-Asmarat, el-Badr
Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA)	Protecting and preserving the heritage of Egypt (formerly The Supreme Council of Antiquities of the Ministry of Culture from 1994 to 2011).	Historic Cairo

### **Main national organizations involved in urban planning**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Roles</b>	<b>Projects (sample)</b>
General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP)	Preparing overall policies of urban planning and sustainable urban development plans at national, regional and local levels.	Cairo 2050, Egypt Vision 2030
Urban Development Fund (UDF) (formely Informal Settlement Development Fund (ISDF))	According to them, identifying, enhancing, and promoting the development of informal settlements, supplying the areas with basic services (water, sanitation, electricity). Abides with the national campaign City without slums supposed to end by 2021	All unplanned areas: service provision Unsafe areas : to be partly removed
National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH)	Heritage protection: proposing draft laws, ensuring implementation of regulations, conducting research and studies, listing historical buildings.	Facades in Khedivial Cairo
New Urban Community Authority (NUCA)	Identifying new city sites, and formulating their development strategies, ensuring the functioning and management of their infrastructure and public facilities in new cities, allocating land lots and providing state-subsidized housing project.	Mubarak Housing Project, new cities
The Sovereign Fund of Egypt (TSFE)	Attracting private investments and co-investing with private actors in state-owned assets to maximize their value and efficiency for the Egyptian economy.	Complex of the Mugamma
Housing and Building Research Center (HBRC)	Leading research in housing and building techniques, organizing national events, delivering certifications for building material producers.	Future Cities Conference



### **State-owned companies**

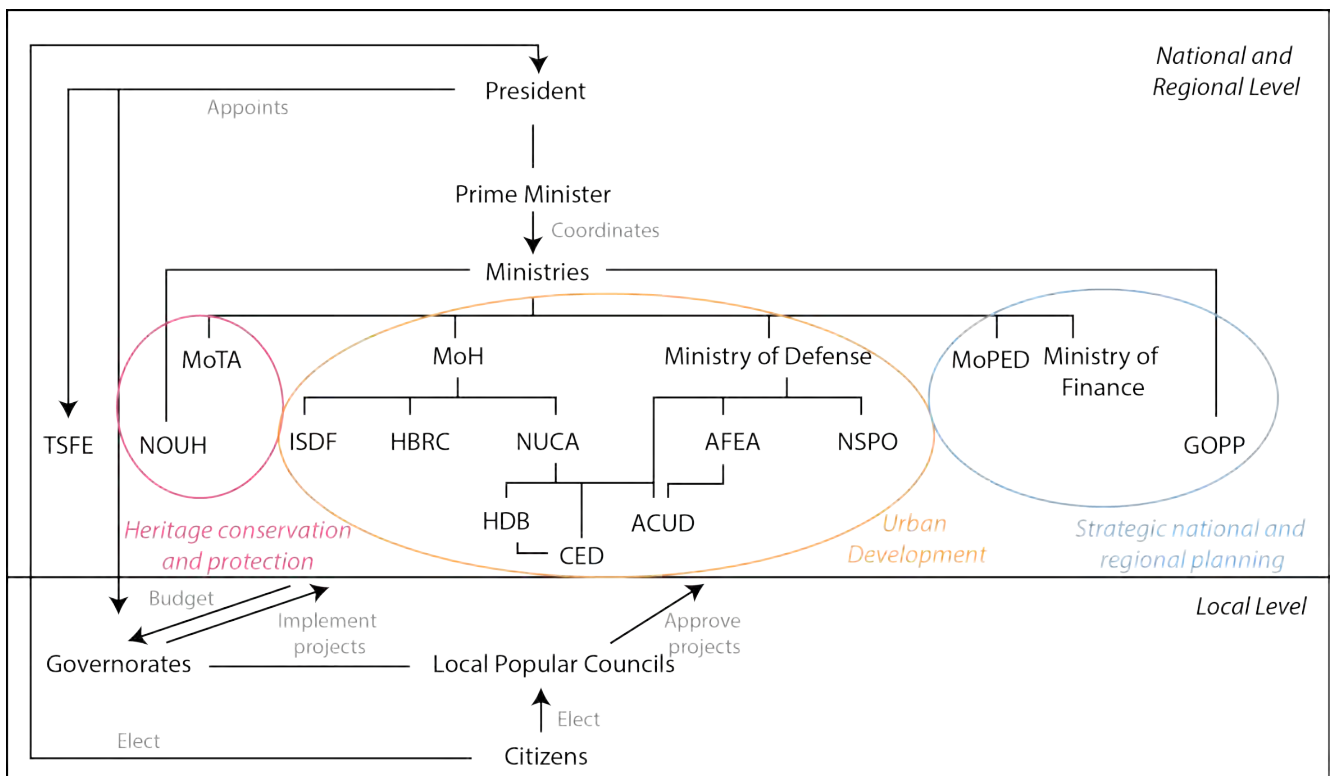
State-owned companies that are for profit but most of the capital is owned by the state. For example: the Administrative Capital for Urban Development (ACUD) for the NAC under MoH and Ministry of Defense; the Housing and Development Bank (HDB) specialized in financing housing project; the City Edge Development (CED) company for the construction of new cities under MoH and the HDB, Arab Contractors for infrastructure such as bridges, roads and buildings (Senate Council, Parliament and the monorail for the NAC for instance).

### **The army**

The Armed Forces Engineering Authority (AFEA) is an agency of the Ministry of defense. The presidential decree n°23 of 2015 considered the AFEA as a body concerned with planning and organizing construction work for strategic areas of military importance, lands allocated or owned by the armed forces and the national projects. The chairman of AFEA is a member of the board of directors of ACUD. The AFEA is then engaged in several projects: the NAC, road infrastructures, social housings such as al-Badr. The National Service Projects Organization (NSPO) is an agency of the Armed Forces, responsible for services, specialized industries such as cement and construction. The army has then several roles: owners and managers of land, urban planners, and construction company (Sayigh, 2019 ; Abul-Magd, 2017).

### **Local government: a top-down approach**

Governorates are responsible for implementing urban policies and to lead some local projects. They manage public utilities and services. Their budget is coming from the central government and they have to execute the state's general policy (Tadamun, n.d.). The president appoints governors that are all former militaries. The Local Popular Councils are supposed to be elected by the population at the governorate and district level to represent voices of people. They are responsible for approving development plans and budgets, establishing and administering public facilities except the projects deemed national or established by presidential decree. But in reality, the weight of the ruling party in members of the councils and in the decision is predominant (Hendawy, 2017). No election was organized since 2011. The decentralization has recessed since then, especially in the densest urban areas. More flexibility is given to rural areas also under the inflexion of United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and international donor agencies.



Source: Tadamun.co, 2017; Hendawy, 2017. Credits: Monfleur, 2022

Fig. 7: Map of national, regional and local actors and their relationships. This graph is an attempt to map relationships between the public actors mentioned above. Credits: Monfleur, 2022.

### Public-private relationships

The dichotomy between private and public can be blurred and more complex to map. Privatization is fostered by public actors. In one project, both types of actors can be partners. The public actors can also subcontract tasks to the private domain: the ACUD subcontracts construction in the NAC to companies such as China Fortune Land Development or China State Construction Engineering Corporation or Orascom Construction. Private actors can be advisers and experts. The role of cabinet of architects and urban planning has to be considered: we can mention 5+UDC, a consortium of five Egyptian engineering firms for the master planning of the NAC; Dar al-Handasah, an international firm responsible for the CBD in the NAC; Foster+Planners, a multinational firm in charge of the master plan of Maspero Triangle. They can also be actor of rehabilitation, such as al-Ismaelia Real Estate Company which renovates buildings and offering them as cultural, retail, office or co-working spaces in Downtown Cairo.

### The role of international and foreign actors

Among international actors, we can mention also the institutions who set financial and urban “good practices” and influence practices of urban planning and public policies in Egypt: for instance, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank for the structural adjustment reforms; the UNESCO for Historic Cairo and Giza Pyramid which are enlisted as a “World Heritage Site”; the United Nations which set Sustainable Development Goals (the SDG 11 is for “Sustainable Cities and Communities). They can also be actors of specific projects: UN-Women launched the Program of the Greater Cairo Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces in Imbaba

or Manshiet Nasr; UN-Habitat is part of the Egypt Housing Strategy and Egypt Vision 2030; GIZ, a German state-owned company, launched the National Solid Waste Management Program or the Participatory Infrastructure Project with the financial help of the European Union.

## **V. Urbanization issues**

Greater Cairo population is one of the fast growth among world metropolis : more than half a million inhabitants are added each year to its population. Challenges are huge and one of the major strategy has been to restrict building on agricultural areas (with a full prohibition since one year) and to encourage urban developments on state/desert lands. The construction of social housing has become more and more reserved to intermediate stratas and thus, the bulk of urbanization is divided into precarious neighborhoods and selective urban developments in the desert. But we should not forget the bulk of existing neighborhoods, the Islamic core undergoing a continuous decrease of its population and the but of mixed neighborhoods usually neglected by public policies.

### **Low-income housing and precarious neighborhoods (AD)**

It is not very new: the majority of the greater Cairo population is living in underserved areas usually called informal. They are mostly divided into 2 categories: on desert or non cultivated land publicly land for the “occupation” type (land invasion) (a) ; on private/agricultural land for the majority of them with the best level of tenure security (b)

The first category is mostly concentrated in three major “mega-slums” that are ‘Izbat Khaïrallah (IK), ‘Izbat al Haggana (see D. Khalil, 2021) and Manshiyat Nasser (Deboulet, Florin, 2014 ; du Roy, 2022). Two of them are known to host around 1 million inhabitants. These neighborhoods have been classified as unsafe by the former ISDF agency (today UDF) and deemed to be partly removed. Some also host some upgrading programs as the IK under the supervision of the French development agency and Masmeda (an organization dealing with small enterprises). This category undergoes a tremendous demographic growth with little public investment except for sewage and water through the conversion to a meter system that equates residents with consumers (D. Khalil, 2022). Major regeneration programs have been undertaken since the late 2000 and with a strong acceleration since 2015. As Maspero alternative experience has turned into a total destruction and the population dispersed namely in far-away relocation sites (O. Khalil, 2022), so is it the case with the relocation of part of IK residents to the new “gated low-cost community” of Al Asmarat following other relocations in 6 of October city. In short, we observe a form of “residualisation” of the most vulnerable part of the neighborhoods. Meanwhile, the majority of popular-planned neighborhoods are undergoing a new campaign undermining the foundations of this housing for the majority<sup>5</sup>. Their capacity to host a huge population is very high, lets us consider that the governorate of Giza has a majority of its 7

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/98524/Saving-Egyptians-from-the-plague-of-unplanned-construction>

million dwellers<sup>6</sup> leaving in non-recognized districts... But these neighborhoods are plagued with incredibly high densities and few investments. If the quality of living is quite good compared with most of the “slums” in the world, with most of the buildings built in concrete and masonry, the basic infrastructure is now unable to cope with what appears as the world record residential densities.



Fig. 8: a) Demolitions to create the new park and new real estate complex in Al Fustat.  
b) Urbanization on agricultural land : regularity and management problems. Credits: Deboulet, 2022

### **Paradoxes of new cities (LM)**

The « obsession to conquer the desert » (Sims, 2015) by new cities is not really solving the issue of the city center. The desert cities failed to attract enough inhabitants: in 2006, 60% of the housing were vacant in these cities against 30% in Greater Cairo (Florin, 2012). Several reasons could be advanced: lack of planning, of basic services and of public transport, expensive housing, lack of transparency in the allocation of parcels by NUCA. Some researchers talks about an “ill-development” (Barthel, 2011, 185). The housing in those new cities is mostly targeting upper middle and upper classes, reinforcing socio-spatial segregation. New cities can have also negative impacts on the environment: energetic cost are important in terms of water consumption for the green spaces (parks, golfs...) in the middle of the desert. New cities are then considered more as a tool of speculation to nourish a bubble and a tool of financierization of the city than a tool for redistributing the population and developing the country (Barthel, 2011 ; Sims, 2015 ; Denis, 2011). Having a ghost city, a “golfian air-conditioned and isolated bubble” (Alexandrani, 2014) where lower and upper class are segregated and a city consuming a lot of energy and water is also a concern for the NAC which is surrounded by a lot of uncertainties

---

<sup>6</sup> Even if Giza is technically speaking not a city, it is worth to note that it is now described in Wikipedia as the 4<sup>th</sup> largest city in Africa.

(Stadnicki et Benchetrit, 2017): will the NAC success to attract people? will it be just an extension of Cairo or a self-sufficient city ?

### **Lack of public spaces: privatization and lack of social access (LM)**

Cairo seems to be characterized by a lack of open/green spaces. Semi-private and private spaces seem to be at the core of sociability of middle and upper classes such as gated communities, clubs, and coffeehouses, leisure park and malls (Singerman et Amar, 2006 ; Singerman, 2011 ; Abaza, 2016). They are not affordable for lower class, participating in social segregation. When the materiality of the city offers enough open space to interact, limitations of access characterize their management by public and private actors: El-Azhar Park, built in 2005 by the foundation Aga Khan, is not free of charge; Abdeen Square in Downtown has been closed by a fence and the governorate charges now to enter it; the new corniche along the Nile, Mamsha el-Ahl (The Walk of People) is securitized by guards. Observers underline as well the deterioration of those spaces as they need better management (Tadamun, 2014).

## **VI. Environment and uncertainties (AD)**

“Egypt is highly vulnerable to the risks of climate change impacts” (NDC, 2022).

Except for the hydric stress, lets browse a few other recent aspects. Precisely the new walkway along the Nile has recently been plagued by an international media coverage of the 32 houseboats supposed to move in order to make way for a new commodified landscape. This decision enforced namely by the ministry of irrigation has been decided at the presidential level. Environment becomes a new topic of interest and discussion because of the COP 27 venue. The *mamsha* is exemplary of an increased tendency to recapture all vacant or low-value spaces as well as to increase the pressure on trees cutting, part of them to produce vegetable coal. Trees cutting have become a recurrent motive of complaint among ordinary Cairenes that already suffer one of the highest residential density (527 pers/hectare, NDC 2022).

Building large roads (up to 60 and even 90 meters) is done at the expense of the green inner promenades and streets and of the pedestrians (see Knoerr, 2021). Cairo has 0.8 square meters green space per capital, a lower rate than Dubai or Istanbul (Tadamun, 2014). Between 2017 and 2020, Cairo lost about 900 000 square meter of green spaces, private and public, and the individual share of green spaces is now 0,74 square meter (Aly et Dimitrijevic, 2022).

Meanwhile, air pollution is being monitored with little points of control and a World Bank loan has been contracted in order to reinforce the system. Air pollution through PM 2,5 is very severe (even if seemingly lower than in most of very industrial Asian cities) and mostly due to car traffic, heavy public works and waste open-air burning (this last aspect accounts for half of Cairo air pollution). The Egyptian Agency for Environment is currently facing difficulties to cope with the COP and the ministry of environment has issued a series of recommendations and guidelines to be followed<sup>7</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> Nationally determined contributions (established for the preparation of COP 27), June 2022.



Fig. 9: a) Qasr el Nil bridge, a day of high pollution. Credits: Deboulet, 2022. b) A high contribution of public works to the air quality deprivation. The site of the NAC. Credits: Deboulet, 2021

## VII. Residents' and civil society's place in the city

### Initiatives from civil society after the revolution (LM)

Most of the projects described previously are top-down, don't leave a lot of space for inhabitants' participation, and lack transparency. Nonetheless, inhabitants are not absent from the production of the city. The Egyptian revolution in 2011 can be described as a way to reclaim the right to the city by being in urban spaces (Pagès-El Karoui, 2014). The revolution opened the opportunity for an "urban activism" (Stadnicki, 2013): several local initiatives to improve quality of living conditions, to protect heritage, to rehabilitate urban areas and to increase participation of inhabitants (Panetta, 2018 ; Shawkat, Khalil et Zaazaa, 2015). Initiative of documenting, mapping and archiving are also coming those actors (Nagati et Stryker, 2013 ; Stryker, Nagati et Mostafa, 2013 ; Stryker et Nagati, 2016). We could mention the examples of CLUSTER, Madd Platform, Takween, Tadamun, Megawra. Others try to advocate for a more sustainable and livable cities, promoting biking, and organizing city tours, such as the company Tabdeel.

### Very restricted space for these initiatives since 2015 (AD)

The context of redevelopment in the capital city is not deemed favorable to these initiatives. Compared to the scope of the urban and environmental issues, there is yet some hurdles for these initiatives to politicize and disseminate.

We would like to distinguish three main type of initiatives :

(a) Those that have been mostly channeled and made official by international donors are the most visible : Very Nile (founded by a French « entrepreneur » and sustained by French donors) is now developing a new economic model that is self-sustainable ; Tabdeel has been integrated as a consultant with, among others, Un-Habitat, for launching the first cycling scheme in the 19th century center, as part of the urban regeneration program....among others. Cluster is

also financed by international donor agencies and acting mostly in a third space in Ard al Liwa, also back to design and architectural work.

(b) Those who maintain a participatory approach is possible under the condition that the partner is some kind of international entity and to have most of the activity as consultant.

Many more initiatives are now acting under cover. The bulk of the participatory activities in open air have ceased, over control over their activity goes along with alliances with public authorities (Megawra) and a large international recognition or with the restricted visibility of activities (10 Tooba). Participatory initiatives aiming at on-site rehousing such as the Madd platform Maspero are a lost memory, with the full site now covered with residential high-end buildings and the complete loss of the initial integrative approach.

c) New digital contests and petitions against several projects in wealthy neighborhoods (Zamalek, Maadi) but also in the Gabbana (so called city of the death) threatened by destruction.

## Bibliography

- Abaza Mona, 2016, « Public space in Cairo: Dubai contra Tahrir », *Contemporary Political Theory*, vol. 15, p. 427-435.
- Abu-Lughod Janet, 1971, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious*. Princeton University Press.
- Abul-Magd Zeinab, 2017, *Militarizing the Nation: The Army, Business, and Revolution in Egypt*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- Alexandrani Ismail, 2014, « Le Khédivé al-Sissi entre deux capitales », *Les Carnets du CEDEJ (originellement: Assafir al-Araby)*. Adresse : <https://egrev.hypotheses.org/1251> [Consulté le : 28 novembre 2019].
- Aly Dalia and Branka Dimitrijevic, 2022, « Public green space quantity and distribution in Cairo, Egypt », *Journal of Engineering and Applied Science*, vol. 69, n° 15. Adresse : <https://doi.org/10.1186/s44147-021-00067-z> [Consulté le : 1 juin 2022].
- Barthel Pierre-Arnaud, 2011, « Repenser les « villes nouvelles » du Caire : défis pour mettre fin à un développement non durable », *Égypte/Monde arabe*, vol. 8, n° 1, p. 181-207.
- Deboulet Agnès and Bénédicte Florin. « Mobilisations pré-révolutionnaires : quand les habitants des quartiers populaires du Caire (se) manifestent », *Égypte/Monde arabe*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2014, pp. 39-65.
- Denis Éric, 2011, « La financiarisation territoriale observée à partir des métropoles égyptiennes et indiennes », *Revue Tiers Monde*, vol. 2, n° 206, p. 139-158.
- Florin Bénédicte, 2012, « Les quartiers fermés du Grand Caire. Dimensions urbanistiques et idéologiques d'une forme de ville : nouvelle urbanité ou césure urbaine ? », *L'Espace Politique*, vol. , n° 17. Adresse : <http://journals.openedition.org/espacepolitique/2393> [Consulté le : 27 novembre 2019].
- Hendawy Mennatullah, 2017, « Connecting Urban Policy Making and Implementation », Adresse : <https://www.slideshare.net/mhendawy/urban-planning-and-development-in-egypt>.
- Nagati Omar and Benedicte Stryker (ed.), 2013, *Archiving the City in Flux: Cairo's Shifting Urban Landscape since the January 25th Revolution*, Le Caire, CLUSTER.
- Othmane Insaf Ben and Roman Stadnicki, 2015, « De vieilles recettes pour de nouveaux projets d'aménagement en Égypte : une « contre-révolution urbaine » en marche ? », *Maghreb - Machrek*, vol. N° 226, n° 4, p. 11-31.
- Pagès-El Karoui Delphine, 2014, « 2011, l'odyssée de l'espace public égyptien », *Les ondes de choc des révolutions arabes*, Contemporain publications, M. Oualdi, C. Verdeil et D. Pagès-El Karoui éd., Beyrouth, Presses de l'Ifpo, p. 269-291.
- Panetta Claire, 2018, « An 'alternative framework for development:' state-citizen relations, urban revitalization, and Downtown Cairo's passageways », *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 25, n° 9, p. 1-17.



- Panetta Claire, 2019, « Cairo », *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Studies*, A.M. Orum éd., New Jersey, Wiley-Blackwell, p. 1-5. Adresse : <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118568446.eurs0550> [Consulté le : 1 juin 2022].
- Sayigh Yezid, 2019, *Owners of the Republic: An Anatomy of Egypt's Military Economy*, Beirut/Washington, Carnegie Middle East Center.
- Shawkat Yahia and Omnia Khalil and Ahmed Zaaza, 2015, *Parallel Urban Practice in Egypt*, UN-HABITAT, 10Tooba, UNDP.
- Sims David, 2015, *Egypt's Desert Dreams: Development or Disaster?*, Cairo/New York, The American University in Cairo Press.
- Singerman Diane (ed.), 2011, *Cairo Contested: Governance, Urban Space, and Global Modernity*, Cairo/New York, The American University in Cairo Press.
- Singerman Diane and Paul Amar (ed.), 2006, *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Middle East*, Cairo/New York, The American University in Cairo Press.
- Stadnicki Roman, 2013, « De l'activisme urbain en Égypte : émergence et stratégies depuis la révolution de 2011 », *EchoGéo*, n° 25. Adresse : <http://journals.openedition.org/echogeo/13491> [Consulté le : 27 novembre 2019].
- Stadnicki Roman, 2014, « Introduction – Les acteurs urbains à l'épreuve de la transition en Égypte », *Égypte/Monde arabe*, vol. , n° 11, p. 7-21.
- Stadnicki Roman and Manuel Benchetrit, 2017, « Sissi-City, la " nouvelle capitale " d'Égypte : enquête sur une publicité bien gardée », *La revue du crieur*. Adresse : <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01691550> [Consulté le : 28 novembre 2019].
- Stryker Beth and Omar Nagati (ed.), 2016, *Creative Cities: Re-framing Downtown Cairo*, Cairo, CLUSTER.
- Stryker Beth and Omar Nagati and Magda Mostafa (ed.), 2013, *Learning from Cairo: Global Perspectives and Future Visions*, CLUSTER. Cairo.
- Tadamun, n.d., « The Governor », *Tadamun.co*. Adresse : [http://www.tadamun.co/?post\\_type=gov-entity&p=839&lang=en&lang=en#.Yp8Q3ZNBx0t](http://www.tadamun.co/?post_type=gov-entity&p=839&lang=en&lang=en#.Yp8Q3ZNBx0t) [Consulté le : 7 juin 2022].
- Tadamun, 2014, « The Right to Public Space in The Egyptian Constitution », *Tadamun.co*. Adresse : <http://www.tadamun.co/the-right-to-public-space-in-the-egyptian-constitution/?lang=en#fn2> [Consulté le : 1 juin 2022].