

THE POLITICS  
OF NEGLECT  
THE EGYPTIAN STATE  
IN CAIRO, 1974-98

*W. Judson Dorman*

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## DECLARATION

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The work presented in this thesis is my own. All sources used are indicated in the footnotes and the References section, and all assistance received has been gratefully noted in the Acknowledgements. Any errors of fact, interpretation and presentation remain my own.

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W. Judson Dorman                      Date

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines state-society relations in Egypt, and the logic of durable authoritarianism since 1952. It does so, through an examination of the Egyptian state's neglectful rule, from the 1970s through the 1990s, of its capital Cairo. In particular, the thesis focuses on state inaction *vis-à-vis* Cairo's informal housing sector: those neighbourhoods established on land not officially sanctioned for urbanization. Since the early 1990s—when Islamist militants used them to launch attacks on the Mubarak government—such communities have been stigmatized in Egyptian public discourse as threats to the nation's social, moral and political health. Western scholars, by contrast, have valorized them as exemplifying popular agency.

The central research question of the thesis is to explain why the Egyptian state has been unable to intervene effectively in these informal neighbourhoods—despite the apparent challenges they pose, the authoritarian state's considerable unilateral power and the availability of western assistance. The short answer to the question, is that the very factors which sustain the authoritarian political order constrain the Egyptian state's ability to intervene in its capital. The autocratic post-1952 political order is intimately linked to a neglectful and indifferent style of rule. That this neglect is not simply the result of structural resource constraints, is demonstrated through the examination of externally funded donor projects—none of which were particularly successful or sustainable. Their failures can be plausibly explained in terms of the challenges they posed to the logic of autocratic rule.

In other words, informal Cairo endures because it is, in part, a consequence of the post-1952 dispensation of power. The exigencies of authoritarian rule are a substantial part of its conditions of possibility and durability. Such linkages complicate Egyptian interpretations of informality as social pathology, as well as its valorization in western scholarship.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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AID	US Agency for International Development
AID/RIG/A	US Agency for International Development, Regional Inspector General/Audit
AMBRIC	American British Consultants
CEDEJ	Centre d'Etudes et de Documentation Economique, Juridique et Sociale
CEOSS	Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services
CFE	Crédit Foncier Egyptien
CHF	Cooperative Housing Foundation
CHRLA	Center for Human Rights Legal Aid
CLF	Construction Loan Fund
CNN	Cable Network News
CWO	Cairo Wastewater Organization
DfID	Department for International Development
EAJP	Executive Agency for Joint Projects
EMS	Extension of Municipal Services
ESF	Economic Support Fund
FAR	Fixed Amount Reimbursable
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
GCPC	Greater Cairo Planning Commission
GCWWP	Greater Cairo Wastewater Project
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOGCWS	General Organization for the Greater Cairo Water Supply
GOPP	General Organisation for Physical Planning

GOSD	General Organization for Sanitary Drainage
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HNC	Helwan New Community
HS	Homogeneous Sector
IAURIF	Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région d'Ile-de-France
ISC	Institutional Support Contract
LE	livre égyptienne (Egyptian pound)
LIHDU	Low Income Housing Development Unit
LIHF	Low Income Housing Fund
NEF	Near East Foundation
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NUPS	National Urban Policy Study
ODA	Overseas Development Administration
O&M	operations and maintenance
UDS	Urban Development Support
WWTP	wastewater treatment plant

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## NOTE ON ARABIC TRANSLITERATION & TRANSLATION

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When quoting, citing or otherwise using Arabic materials, one must strike a balance between transparency and simplicity. Therefore, well-known names will be spelled as they appear in English-language reportage and the secondary literature, for example, Nasser not ‘Abd al-Nasir. The same principle will also be applied to Cairo place names, for example Helwan rather than Hulwan. Some names are transliterated as their owners do when writing in English.

Arabic names and words will otherwise be transliterated according to the simplified version of the system used in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* in which the letter ‘ayn is represented by (‘) and hamza by (’), for example ‘ashwa’iyyat. As this thesis is largely Cairo-focused, transliterations will reflect the Cairene colloquial pronunciation in the text—for example, the ‘hard’ jim in Maglis al-Sha‘b—but not in the references.

With respect to translation, wherever Arabic words are used in the text for the first time, a translation will follow (usually in parentheses). When using terms which are commonly translated in the secondary literature—such as governorate or the names of the various bureaucratic units—no transliteration of the original Arabic will be provided. While book and thesis titles will be transliterated and translated in the footnotes and bibliography, article and paper titles will only be translated.

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---

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# PART A

## THE EGYPTIAN STATE IN CAIRO

---

# CHAPTER 1

## AUTHORITARIANISM & NEGLECT IN EGYPT

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Too often people assume that because a country has a flag and an army, it must have an effective state. They infer that, because a government is not restrained by a democratic constitution or a representative assembly, state power must be autocratic and unlimited. Westerners in particular tend to see Middle Eastern dictatorships like those of Nasser and Sadat as modernized versions of “Oriental despotism.” They presume that in Egypt the state is strong and society is weak. The reality is almost exactly the opposite.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis is about how Egypt’s non-democratic, or authoritarian, political order—in place since the Free Officers’ seizure of power in July 1952—has shaped the state’s capabilities in dealing with Egyptian society. Empirically, the thesis focuses on the Egyptian state’s apparent failure to govern Cairo. This absence of governance is manifest in the proliferation of informal communities—specifically those established on land not authorized for urbanization—throughout the city. Since the early 1990s, when some of them hosted Islamist militants bent on overthrowing Husni Mubarak’s government, such neighbourhoods have been pathologized as *‘ashwai’iyyat* (random or haphazard areas). That said, state interventions there have been—in practice—extremely circumscribed. The central research question of the thesis is hence to explain why the state has been unable to intervene effectively in the *‘ashwai’iyyat*—despite the apparent challenges posed by such areas, its considerable unilateral power and the availability of western assistance to do so.

Analytically, this empirical puzzle depends on the assumption that modern states are intrinsically activist—defined by their capacity to *do* things. Other traditions in comparative politics, however, portray state capacity as deriving more from the organization of power relations within the state, and the resulting character of state-society relations. In a nutshell, states organized along democratic lines have considerably greater capacity to regulate, penetrate and mobilize the societies they

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<sup>1</sup> Yahya M. Sadowski (1991) *Political Vegetables? Businessman and Bureaucrat in the Development of Egyptian Agriculture*. Brookings Institution: 90.

govern than those where the political order is not based on explicit societal consent. While those of the authoritarian regime type, such as in Egypt, have far greater powers to act without bottom-up consent—their capacity to penetrate and mobilize the societies they merely rule is more circumscribed. Such constraints can take at least three forms, including:

- State-society disengagement, necessitating the use of indirect rule techniques and limiting the extent of social extraction.
- The subordination of state capacities to the exigencies of regime reproduction, in other words the effects of patrimonialism, clientelism and personal rule.
- Risk avoidance strategies to avoid provoking bottom-up opposition to their rule.

Together, these three elements represent a logic of state inaction, incompetence and indifference—henceforth referred to as *neglectful rule*—which is itself part of a broader logic of authoritarian power relations. While contributing to the reproduction of non-democratic rule in Egypt, it has had a debilitating effect on state capacity. Indeed, all governments since 1952 have depended on international support and resources to compensate for their domestic constraints.

So the short answer to the question of inaction in Cairo, is that the very factors which constitute and sustain the authoritarian political order constrain the Egyptian state's ability to intervene in it. Put somewhat differently, the *'ashwai'iyyat* endures because it is, in part, a product of the post-1952 dispensation of power; over fifty years of autocratic rule have 'informalized' Egyptian society.

Yet the Egyptian state's apparent neglect of Cairo, might also be reasonably understood as a consequence of the structural impoverishment of the state, stemming from Egypt's historical under-development. In this context, the role of international patrons becomes crucial. Although successive western and international donors attempted projects in Cairo from the mid 1970s onward—many of which provided resources and were concerned with fostering an administratively competent Egyptian state—none of these were successful or sustainable. Indeed, Egyptian state agencies often seem to have obstructed these efforts to foster more activist forms of rule. Their failure can be plausibly explained in terms of the challenge they posed to the logic of neglectful rule and the reproduction of authoritarianism. Thus the post-1952 dispensation is not merely part of the informal Cairo's conditions of possibility, it also precludes its reform.

Organizationally, the thesis is divided into two parts. Part A, comprising Chapters 1 and 2, focuses on the domestic Egyptian context. Chapter 1 provides an overview of state-society relations in Egypt since 1952. It lays the background for examining the state's neglectful rule in Cairo—the main focus of Chapter 2. Part B places this state-society relationship in its international context. Chapter 3 provides a brief

introduction to the politics of aid provision in Egypt since 1970s, paying particular attention to the role of Egypt's principal backer the United States. The remainder of the section, Chapters 4 – 6, are case studies of various donor efforts to improve the Egyptian state's governance of Cairo. The conclusion, Chapter 7, not only draws together the themes and arguments from throughout the thesis, it also assesses their significance with respect to the larger literatures on Egyptian politics and informality.

More immediately, the sections of this introductory chapter proceed as follows. The main body begins with a short case study illustrating the Egyptian state's non-intervention in the putatively disorderly zones of its capital as the key thesis problematic (1.1). This puzzle sets the stage for a brief review of the literature on the Egyptian state as a 'lame leviathan', combining institutional softness with durable authoritarianism (1.2). The focus then switches to the comparative-politics literature, briefly examining the linkages between state capacity and political order and specifically durable authoritarianism and neglectful rule (1.3). The next two sections of the chapter apply these linkages to the Egyptian case in some detail. First is a schematic examination of the constitutive elements of durable authoritarianism in Egypt since 1952 (1.4). Second is an account of the Egyptian state's failings—explicitly linked to the exigencies of regime reproduction—within which the neglectful rule of Cairo can subsequently be understood (1.5). The chapter then takes up the international dimension, looking at how successive governments in Cairo have depended on various kinds of externally generated resources to sustain their rule (1.6). The penultimate section of the chapter is a brief conclusion noting that because Egyptian governments have used the state to rule Egyptian society, they cannot be said to govern it (1.7). At the close, the chapter presents a short discussion of the parameters within which the thesis was researched and written (1.8).

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## 1.1 CITY OF DISORDER?

In the early 1990s, Cairo's informal neighbourhoods were represented, in Egyptian public discourse, as a zone of disorder and menace. The deployment of social pathology discourse was not especially novel, but nonetheless reflected the Mubarak government's seemingly unprecedented concern for informal Cairo. This preoccupation had at least two antecedents.

### 1.1.1 URBAN CRISIS

The first was an earthquake which struck Cairo in October 1992.<sup>2</sup> While of limited duration and magnitude, the tremor nonetheless killed 561 Egyptians, destroyed 5,000 buildings and did some \$1.2 billion in damage overall.<sup>3</sup> In the aftermath of the disaster, the Egyptian government was slow to act, perhaps a consequence of bureaucratic inertia aggravated by Mubarak's absence from the country.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, Islamic organizations—most notably the Muslim Brotherhood—reacted with greater dispatch, swiftly providing relief to the afflicted.<sup>5</sup> The Mubarak government, however, soon sought to suppress these efforts—perhaps because the Brotherhood had framed them in explicitly political terms or simply because they represented an alternative to its own.<sup>6</sup>

The state's relatively feeble yet monopolistic response provoked two months of furious debate in the Egyptian press.<sup>7</sup> Government-controlled papers were sometimes on the defensive in the face of scathing criticism from those of the opposition parties. One such paper urged the citizenry to "sweep aside this incompetent government with the rubble of the earthquake."<sup>8</sup> A week after the tremor, some of those left homeless demonstrated in front of the Maglis al-Shura (consultative assembly) building and local-government offices—the latter protest becoming a small riot—against the government's failure to re-house them.<sup>9</sup>

A second, perhaps more important, antecedent was the government's increasing realization that Islamist militants were using informal Cairo neighbourhoods as safe havens.<sup>10</sup> While evidence of this phenomenon dates back at least to 1988,<sup>11</sup> clashes between the security forces and militants in such areas were intensifying

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<sup>2</sup> Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies (1996) *Arab Strategic Report 1995* (in Arabic). Al-Ahram: 454; Majlis al-Shura (1996) "Policy Paper": 41.

<sup>3</sup> International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1996) *Cities at Risk: Making Cities Safer Before Disaster Strikes*. IDNDR: 15; Munich Re (1998) *World Map of Natural Hazards*. Münchener Rückversicherungs-Gesellschaft: 21.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Degg (1993) "The 1992 'Cairo Earthquake': Cause, Effect and Response," *Disasters*, 17, 3 (September): 235.

<sup>5</sup> Hesham al-Awadi (2005) "Mubarak and the Islamists: Why Did the 'Honeymoon' End?," *Middle East Journal*, 59, 1 (Winter): 73-4.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Awadi (2005): 73-4.

<sup>7</sup> For a comprehensive account, see Galila El Kadi (1993) "The Egypt Earthquake" (in French) *Egypte/Monde arabe*, No. 14 (2e trimestre): 163-95.

<sup>8</sup> El Kadi (1993): 175.

<sup>9</sup> Carol Berger (1992) "Protest Mounts in Egypt Over Pace of Quake Relief," *Christian Science Monitor* (20 October): 6.

<sup>10</sup> Eric Denis (1994) "The Staging of the 'Ashwaiyyat'" (in French) *Egypte/Monde arabe*. No. 20 (4e trimestre): 120.

<sup>11</sup> Nabil 'Umar (1988) "Collapse of the Government of 'Ayn Shams" (in Arabic) *Ruz al-Yusuf*, No. 3158 (19 December): 14-18.

throughout 1992.<sup>12</sup> In particular, activists from the Gama'a Islamiyya (Islamic Group) had entered Munira Gharbiyya (western Munira)—a refuse-strewn informal neighbourhood on the west bank of the Nile in north Giza, sometimes also referred to as Imbaba (see Map 2.1)—in the late 1980s, establishing a 'state within the state'.<sup>13</sup> Militant efforts to build a pious counter-society came to an end in December 1992. Their (perhaps premature) declaration of an "Islamic Republic of Imbaba" to foreign correspondents, provoked the Mubarak government.<sup>14</sup> It dispatched some 18,000 heavily armed police troops to Munira Gharbiyya, eventually crushing the militants in what has been called the "Siege of Imbaba."<sup>15</sup>

Both the aftermath of the earthquake and the protracted clash with the Islamists were profoundly disturbing to the government for a number of reasons. To begin with, they occurred during a period of country-wide confrontation with the Islamists, whom the government then seemed unable to counter.<sup>16</sup> More specifically, they suggested that the state had lost control of its capital,<sup>17</sup> which Egypt's rulers have long viewed as a security problem.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps most importantly, the government's inability to provide earthquake relief and the seeming squalor of Munira Gharbiyya resonated with a broader worry that its long-term survival was threatened by the inability to address the country's chronic socio-economic problems.<sup>19</sup> The relative success of the Islamists, with respect to the former, reinforced this point. Indeed, the resulting popular support may have encouraged them to confront the state in Munira.<sup>20</sup> Informal Cairo thus constituted an

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<sup>12</sup> Galila El Kadi (1994) "Cairo: The Spontaneous City Under Control" (in French) *Monde arabe Maghreb Machrek*, Numéro spécial (1er trimestre): 36.

<sup>13</sup> Detailed discussions of this case include: Hisham Mubarak (1995) *Al-irhabiyyun qadimun! dirasa muqarana bayn mawqif "al-ikhwān al-muslimin" wa jama'at al-jihad min qadiyat al-<sup>u</sup>nf (1928-1994)* [The Terrorists Are Coming! A Comparative Study of the Position of the Muslim Brotherhood and Jihad Groups on the Issue of Violence (1938-1994)]. Markaz al-Mahrusa: 237-65; Diane Singerman (1999) "The Construction of a Political Spectacle: The Siege of Imbaba and Egypt's Internal 'Other'," Paper prepared for the Conference Series on Political Structures and Logics of Action in the Face of Economic Liberalization: Distributive and Normative Processes in the Arab Countries of the Mediterranean, CEDEJ/Freie Universität Berlin/Center for the Study of Developing Countries, Cairo University (28-30 October); see also Salwa Ismail (2000) "The Popular Movement Dimensions of Contemporary Militant Islamism: Socio-Spatial Determinants in the Cairo Urban Setting," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 42, 2 (April): 363-93.

<sup>14</sup> Ahmed Abdalla (1993) "Egypt's Islamists and the State: From Complicity to Confrontation," *Middle East Report*, 23, 4 (July-August): 29.

<sup>15</sup> Singerman (1999): 2.

<sup>16</sup> Jon B. Alterman (2000) Egypt: Stable but for How Long?, *Washington Quarterly*, 23, 4 (Autumn): 108.

<sup>17</sup> With respect to Munira Gharbiyya, see also Singerman (1999): 4, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Earl L (Tim) Sullivan (1983) "Should Cairo Be Governed?" in Richard Lobban ed., *Urban Research Strategies for Egypt, Cairo Papers in Social Science* 6, 2 (June): 9-10.

<sup>19</sup> For example, see Nabil Abdel-Fattah (1992) "The Political Struggle for Hearts and Minds," *al-Ahram Weekly*, 89 (5-11 November): 7; Cassandra [pseud.] (1995) "The Impending Crisis in Egypt," *Middle East Journal*, 49, 1 (Winter): 9-27.

<sup>20</sup> Singerman (1999): 4.



indictment of the government's developmental failures and represented a potential base for those who threatened it.

### 1.1.2 NAMING & TAMING THE <sup>c</sup>ASHWA'IYYAT

The Mubarak government followed up the siege with a series of security-force sweeps against suspected militants, in Munira Gharbiyya and elsewhere in the metropolitan area.<sup>21</sup> In the longer term, it sought to re-establish at least the appearance of control over its capital.

#### A. LANGUAGES OF SOCIAL MENACE

Initially, this effort was discursive. The 1992 government-Islamist clashes in Cairo were accompanied by the pathologization of informal areas in both the government-controlled and opposition press, a process which intensified following the siege of Imbaba. Labelled *manatiq* <sup>c</sup>*ashwa'iyya* (random or haphazard areas)—collectively <sup>c</sup>*ashwa'iyyat*<sup>22</sup>—they and their inhabitants were depicted as an “uncivilized, almost savage, Other, in need of rehabilitation, education and moral guidance.”<sup>23</sup> In this context, some commentators proclaimed that “clearance is the solution,” urging that state agencies be given the power to undertake large-scale demolitions.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, explaining the rise of the Islamists in terms of the degradation and backwardness of the informal urban environment also allowed them and government officials to suggest a different response: the state could re-order such communities by providing public services. Urban development might thus normalize the <sup>c</sup>*ashwa'iyyat*.<sup>25</sup>

#### B. DEMOLISHING & UPGRADING

In the months following the earthquake and the siege of Imbaba, the Mubarak government sought to demonstrate that it had a policy for informal Cairo beyond coercion, and counter its critics' accusations of neglect and indifference.<sup>26</sup> President

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<sup>21</sup> For example, see al-Ahram Press Agency (1993) “Interior Ministry Arrests 13 ‘Prominent’ Extremists” (11 January) FBIS [Foreign Broadcast Information Service] Daily Report, FBIS-NES-93-007 (11 January); al-Ahram Press Agency (1992) “Alleged Extremist Leaders Arrested Around Country” (13 December) FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-NES-92-240 (14 December); Cairo MENA (1993) “‘Terrorist’ Involved in Attacks on Police Killed” (11 February) FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-NES-93-028 (11 February).

<sup>22</sup> A review of press clippings from this period suggests that there are at least a dozen different expressions, all involving the adjective <sup>c</sup>*ashwa'i*, for describing informal communities and their development.

<sup>23</sup> Singerman (1999): 11; see also, Denis (1994): 125.

<sup>24</sup> For example, Mahmud Shakir (1993) “Clearance is the Solution” (in Arabic) *al-Wafd* (26 February); see also Denis (1994): 128; Ghali Muhammad (1993) “387 <sup>c</sup>Ashwa'iyya Areas in 8 Governorates” (in Arabic) *al-Musawwar* (23 April).

<sup>25</sup> Singerman (1999): 31-6; see also El Kadi (1994): 36.

<sup>26</sup> El Kadi (1994): 36-7.

Mubarak's speeches, for example, began to reflect a new concern for the *'ashwa'iyyat*.<sup>27</sup> On May Day 1993, he declared that dealing with it was a matter of preserving the country's stability.<sup>28</sup> Such concern was further manifest, from early 1993 onwards, in a stream of pronouncements from lower level officials who opined about demolitions, upgrading and blocking emigration to Cairo—on the grounds that it was driving the growth of the *'ashwa'iyyat*.<sup>29</sup>

Although already announced in the preceding months, the two main orientations of state policy—clearances and upgrading—were formally set out by Mubarak in his 1993 May Day speech.<sup>30</sup> On the one hand, Mubarak and his officials declared that approximately sixteen Cairo neighbourhoods were beyond rehabilitation and would hence be demolished.<sup>31</sup> While the clearance list included communities apparently damaged in the earthquake, it did not include any of those where the government had clashed with the Islamists. On the other, they announced much larger-scale plans to upgrade informal communities.<sup>32</sup> Roughly eighty neighbourhoods were to be comprehensively serviced, both with basic infrastructure—water, wastewater and electricity connections—as well as “street-widening, lighting and paving [...] mainly as a security measure meant to ensure easier control.”<sup>33</sup>

### C. THE RETURN OF INDIFFERENCE?

In practice, however, the Mubarak government was rather restrained in its interventions. As will be discussed in 2.5.2, few of the areas slated for demolition had been removed by the end of the 1990s. Despite the privately expressed opinion of a senior housing-ministry planner that informal Cairo *had* been serviced and thus

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<sup>27</sup> Ali al-Sawi (1996) *al-'Ashwa'iyyat wa-namadhij al-tanmiyya* [The *'Ashwa'iyyat* and the Development Models] Center for the Study of Developing Countries, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University: 80-2.

<sup>28</sup> Denis (1994): 121.

<sup>29</sup> For example, Tahani Ibrahim (1993) “After 5 Years a New Direction for Cairo” (in Arabic) *Akhbar al-Yawm* (10 April).

<sup>30</sup> For previews of government policy, see Ibrahim (1993); Mahmud Mu'awwad (1993) “The development of the capital with the beginning of Mubarak's third presidential term” (in Arabic) *al-Ahram* (5 March).

<sup>31</sup> For a complete list of the areas, see IDSC [Information Decision Support Center, Cabinet Office] (n.d.) “Report on High-Density *'Ashwa'iyya* Areas in Certain Governorates of the Republic” (in Arabic) vol 1: 9-10. The rationale for clearance is set out in Majlis al-Shura (1996): 63.

<sup>32</sup> Christian Arandel & Manal El Batran (1997) “The Informal Housing Development Process in Egypt,” DPU Working Paper No 82, Development and Planning Unit, the Bartlett, University College London (July): 25.

<sup>33</sup> Manal El Batran & Christian Arandel (1998) “A Shelter of Their Own: Informal Settlement Expansion in Greater Cairo and Government Responses,” *Environment and Urbanization*, 10, 1 (April): 230; see also El Kadi (1994): 36.

dealt with—there was similarly little evidence that the upgrading of the informal sector was either systematic or sustainable.<sup>34</sup>

### 1.1.3 THE PROBLEMATICS OF NEGLECT

Although this *de facto* policy of inaction probably represents the historic norm for the post-1952 Egyptian state's dealings with Cairo, it raises a number of interesting questions:

*Why did the Mubarak government not remove potentially threatening informal areas?*

With respect to the Islamist challenge in the early 1990s more generally, it made considerable use of the state's powers of coercion, co-optation and strategic manipulation to suppress the militants by the end of the decade.<sup>35</sup> It had few qualms about constricting civil liberties and opportunities for political participation, which may have also facilitated its putative economic-liberalization agenda.<sup>36</sup> Indeed the exemplary demolition of those *'ashwa'iyyat* neighbourhoods from which the Islamists emerged would not have been unprecedented. In 1979, for example, the Sadat government demolished the areas of 'Ashash al-Turguman in the Nile-side neighbourhood of Bulaq and 'Arab al-Muhammadi in 'Abbasiyya (Map 2.1). The removal of the former was, in part, because of its association with the January 1977 riots protesting subsidy reductions.<sup>37</sup> As the housing minister of the time subsequently noted, the state had to do something: its inhabitants were "defying the government."<sup>38</sup>

Another factor favouring coercive intervention is the market liberalization since the 1970s, which some observers see as leading the state to remove low-income and informal neighbourhoods.<sup>39</sup> Quite apart from immediate security concerns, they occupy valuable land and are accused of blighting a modern image of Cairo, which the state seeks to present to western audiences.<sup>40</sup> The Cairene poor would seem

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<sup>34</sup> The use of the term 'private' indicates information given in confidence which will hence not be formally referenced. The identity of the informant remains in the possession of the author.

<sup>35</sup> Fawaz Gerges (2000) "The End of the Islamist Insurgency in Egypt?: Costs and Prospects," *Middle East Journal*, 54, 4 (Fall): 592-612.

<sup>36</sup> Eberhard Kienle (2001) *A Grand Delusion: Democracy and Economic Reform in Egypt*. I.B. Tauris.

<sup>37</sup> Farha Ghannam (2002) *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation, and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo*. University of California Press: 37-40.

<sup>38</sup> Interview, Mustapha al-Hefnawi, Minister of Housing (1978-1980), Cairo, 6 May 1998.

<sup>39</sup> Jörg Gertel (forthcoming) "X-changing Metropolis: Real Markets and Urban Spaces" in Paul Amar & Diane Singerman eds., *Cairo Hegemonic: State, Justice and Urban Social Control in the New Middle East*. American University in Cairo Press.

<sup>40</sup> Ghannam (2002): 25-42; Petra Kuppinger (1995) "Urban Space and Street Vending: Colonial and Post-Colonial Structures Versus Everyday Practices" in Jörg Gertel ed., *The Metropolitan Food System of Cairo*. Verlag für Entwicklungspolitik: 79.

particularly vulnerable, because they lack the political resources shielding low-income urbanites elsewhere in the developing world. While electoral competition provides a set of channels by which informal communities in Latin America and Turkey are integrated into the political system *in situ*, the autocratic and demobilizing character of the post-1952 political order is likely to deprive their Cairene counter-parts of this important political resource.<sup>41</sup>

*Why were the Mubarak government's upgrading efforts similarly limited?*

On the other hand, if President Mubarak had concluded that upgrading was the best means of dealing with the threat apparently posed by informal Cairo, then his government's obvious instinct for self-preservation should have meant that it was more systematic and effective. Financial limitations, while doubtless a factor, are not a complete explanation. As will be discussed from Chapter 3 onwards, international donors had provided significant financial support for Cairo's urban development from the mid-1970s through the 1990s.

*In the absence of state intervention, what is the political significance of the 'ashwa'iyat discourse?*

The absence of decisive state action also raises interesting questions at the level of discourse. Negative representations of the *'ashwa'iyat* seemed to give the Mubarak government considerable discretion in dealing with its putative threat.<sup>42</sup> As Diane Singerman has argued, the notion of disorder embodied in media reportage also entailed a "modern, civilizing vision" of urban order in which the state should demolish informal neighbourhoods so as to rescue their inhabitants "from their moral debasement, physical suffering, and intellectual backwardness."<sup>43</sup> In the absence of such action, however, what was the purpose of the media campaign against informality?

## 1.2 THE EGYPTIAN STATE: CAPACITY VERSUS AUTOCRACY?

There are few obvious answers to these problematics of non-intervention. Despite a substantial corpus of ethnographic writing and historical works on the city, few say much about Cairo's current governance. Such literature as does exist suggests that the city's fragmented control by national ministries has precluded the possibility of

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<sup>41</sup> Asef Bayat (1997a) "Cairo's Poor: Dilemmas of Survival and Solidarity," *Middle East Report*, 27-1, No 202 (Winter): 2-6, 12.

<sup>42</sup> Singerman (1999): 30-1.

<sup>43</sup> Singerman (1999): 17.

urban governance and politics.<sup>44</sup> This chapter will hence be largely concerned with the more general question of how Egypt is ruled. Drawing on the secondary literature, this chapter will set out the necessary interpretive and empirical context in which to situate the subsequent (more primary-source based) discussions of Cairene politics and urban management in Chapter 2.

### 1.2.1 A HEGEMONIC STATE?

At first glance, the study of state non-intervention in an Egyptian context seems equally unpromising. Egyptian political history has long been seen as an account of the state establishing unchallenged dominion over Egyptian society.<sup>45</sup> The period since 1952 fits within a broader narrative whereby the post-independence states of the Middle East become increasingly penetrative *vis-à-vis* the societies they rule.<sup>46</sup> In particular, state-led economic development—henceforth referred to *étatisme*—facilitated the extension of top-down control and made the state’s presence an indisputable part of everyday life.<sup>47</sup> As summed up by P.J. Vatikiotis in the late 1960s: “the state in Egypt today is the greatest industrialist, economic and financial *entrepreneur*, and the biggest employer. The expanded power of the state over society is immense.”<sup>48</sup>

Such administratively weighty states have provided an ideal platform for autocratic political orders, where rulers have been able to crush “unauthorized political activity” and demobilize societies which lacked “the size, complexity, and consciousness to ‘fight back’.”<sup>49</sup> While such claims may be slightly dated, nonetheless the Egyptian state has commonly been regarded as “autonomous,” its rulers able to act unilaterally without need for direct popular sanction.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Farha Ghannam (2001) “‘Conquering the Beast’: Governing Capital Cities in the Middle East” in Seteney Shami ed., *Capital Cities: Ethnographies of Urban Governance in the Middle East*. Centre for Urban & Community Studies, University of Toronto: 38-47; Sullivan (1983): 9-11; Robert Springborg (2003a) “An Evaluation of the Political System at the End of the Millennium” in M. Riad El-Ghonemy ed., *Egypt in the Twenty-First Century: Challenges for Development*. RoutledgeCurzon: 191.

<sup>45</sup> For example, P.J. Vatikiotis (1989) “State and Class in Egypt: A Review Essay” in C.E. Bosworth et al. eds., *The Islamic World: From Classical to Modern Times*. The Darwin Press: 875-89.

<sup>46</sup> Lisa Anderson (1987) “The State in the Middle East and North Africa,” *Comparative Politics*, 20, 1: 7; Albert Hourani (1991) *History of the Arab Peoples*. Warner Books: 381-4; Roger Owen (2000) *State, Power, and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 2nd ed. Routledge: 27-44.

<sup>47</sup> Owen (2000): 30-1, 34-5.

<sup>48</sup> P.J. Vatikiotis (1968) “Some Political Consequences of the 1952 Revolution in Egypt” in P.M. Holt ed, *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt*. Oxford University Press: 369 [emphasis in the original].

<sup>49</sup> Michael C. Hudson (1988) “Democratization and the Problem of Legitimacy in Middle East Politics,” *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, 22, 2 (December): 164-5.

<sup>50</sup> John Waterbury (1983) *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat: The Political Economy of Two Regimes*. Princeton University Press: 12-17.

### 1.2.2 THE 'SOFT STATE' & DURABLE AUTHORITARIANISM

Without directly contradicting the state-hegemony thesis, two closely related trends in the Egyptian-politics literature of recent decades nonetheless suggest a more critical understanding of the state and its capacities since 1952. At least since the 1980s, scholars have been more likely to argue that the Egyptian state was relatively “soft” with only a limited capacity to govern, especially with respect to social mobilization.<sup>51</sup> Most importantly, whereas the earlier literature on Egyptian state strength at times suggested a positive linkage between state capacity and autocracy, the subsequent generation of scholars saw the relationship more negatively.<sup>52</sup> Autocracy and underdevelopment had become closely associated pathologies—engendering an extensive literature on the necessity of political and economic reform.<sup>53</sup>

The second of these trends is a new emphasis on political continuity. Earlier discussions of state strength in the early 1960s had sometimes focused on modernization and change, with the Egyptian military described as a “new middle class.”<sup>54</sup> In the 1970s and early 1980s, scholars were similarly interested in the liberalization and democratization of the post-Nasserist political order.<sup>55</sup> The thrust of more recent scholarship, however, has been on the continuities, and stagnation, of a highly durable authoritarian order.<sup>56</sup>

### 1.3 STATES, REGIMES & NEGLECT

The contemporary Egyptian state is presently understood, therefore, as a “lame leviathan,” appearing “both as domineering and authoritarian *and* as ineffective,

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<sup>51</sup> John Waterbury (1985) “The ‘Soft State’ and the Open Door: Egypt’s Experience with Economic Liberalization, 1974-1984,” *Comparative Politics*, 18, 1 (October): 65-83; (1983): 429; see also Richard H. Adams (1986) *Development and Social Change in Rural Egypt*. Syracuse University Press; Hamied Ansari (1986) *Egypt: The Stalled Society*. State University of New York Press; Sadowski (1991).

<sup>52</sup> Concerning the former trend, see Vatikiotis (1968): 369; see also: P.J. Vatikiotis (1961) *The Egyptian Army in Politics: Pattern for New Nations?* Indiana University Press: 242-3.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Springborg (1999) “Political Structural Adjustment in Egypt: A Precondition for Rapid Economic Growth?,” EUI Working Paper, RSC No. 99/9; see also Alan Richards (1995) “Economic Pressures for Accountable Governance in the Middle East and North Africa” in Augustus Richard Norton ed., *Civil Society in the Middle East*, vol. 1. E.J. Brill: 55-78.

<sup>54</sup> Manfred Halpern (1963) *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa*. Princeton University Press: 51-78, 257-61.

<sup>55</sup> Raymond William Baker (1978) *Egypt’s Uncertain Revolution Under Nasser and Sadat*. Harvard University Press; Mark N. Cooper (1982) *The Transformation of Egypt*. Croom Helm; Raymond A. Hinnebusch (1985) *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat: the Post-Populist Development of an Authoritarian-Modernizing State*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>56</sup> For example, Maye Kassem (2004) *Egyptian Politics: the Dynamics of Authoritarianism*. Lynne Rienner.

rickety, and porous.”<sup>57</sup> Such attributes are not mutually exclusive, as the capabilities of particular states derive from the consent of those they rule.

### 1.3.1 STATE CAPACITY & REGIME TYPE

Post-Weberian definitions of the state often introduce it, organizationally, as a differentiated but centralized set of institutions ruling over a demarcated territory.<sup>58</sup> These definitions usually have a functional element as well. States deploy power in the service of particular goals—most basically “a monopoly of authoritative binding rule-making, backed up by a monopoly of the means of physical violence.”<sup>59</sup> States are hence commonly defined with respect to their capacities of intervention, regulation and extraction in the societies upon which they are based.<sup>60</sup> These penetrative capacities are generally seen as the basis of state power, for example *vis-à-vis* other states in the international system.<sup>61</sup>

While such capacities may be intrinsic to standard definitions of the state, their degree in particular empirical cases is not. Rather it derives from the nature of state-society relations. These relations, in turn, are shaped by the state’s internal dispensation of power, often conceptualised by means of the analytical category of *political order* or *regime*:

A regime may be thought of as the formal and informal center of political power and its relations with the broader society. A regime determines who has access to political power, and how those who are in power deal with those who are not.<sup>62</sup>

States and regimes are further distinct from the more empirical category of *government*: “the specific occupants of public office who are in a position to make binding decisions at any given time.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> William A. Munro (1998) *The Moral Economy of the State: Conservation, Community Development, and State Making in Zimbabwe*. Ohio University Center for International Studies: xix.

<sup>58</sup> See Michael Mann (1988) *States, War and Capitalism*. Blackwell Publishers: 2.

<sup>59</sup> Mann (1988): 4.

<sup>60</sup> Crawford Young (1994a) *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. Yale University Press: esp. 35-40.

<sup>61</sup> Barbara G. Haskel (1980) “Access to Society: a Neglected Dimension of Power,” *International Organization*, 34, 1 (Winter): esp. 90-2; Jacek Kugler & William Domke (1986) “Comparing the Strength of Nations,” *Comparative Political Studies*, 19,1 (April): 39-69; Alan C. Lamborn (1983) “Power and the Politics of Extraction,” *International Studies Quarterly*, 27, 2 (June): 125-46.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Fishman (1990) “Rethinking State and Regime: Southern Europe’s Transition to Democracy,” *World Politics*, 42, 3 (April): 428; see also, Stephanie Lawson (1993) “Conceptual Issues in the Comparative Study of Regime Change and Democratization,” *Comparative Politics*, 25, 2 (January): 184-8.

<sup>63</sup> Naomi Chazan et al.. (1992) *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*, 2nd ed, Boulder, Lynne Rienner: 39.

'Liberal-democratic' regimes, for example, are characterized by continuous processes of state-society bargaining and binding.<sup>64</sup> Bargaining may be institutionalized in various ways, but usually includes the routine removal of incumbents via electoral competition and representative structures. By such means, the citizenry are able to hold governments to account and ensure their own views are represented. Binding both derives from and is a crucial pre-requisite for bargaining, and is institutionally manifest in the rule of law, separation of powers and civil and political rights.<sup>65</sup>

At the risk of 'democratic triumphalism', there appears to be an affinity between state competence and democratic power relations. For Michael Mann, capacity in western states is predicated on the state's *infrastructural power* to "actually penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm."<sup>66</sup> Such power derives from state-society engagement, whether understood in terms of "institutionalized channels" of negotiation<sup>67</sup> or collaboration between state and social elites.<sup>68</sup> Insofar as the citizenry are able to choose their rulers—and otherwise bargain with them concerning state policies—they incur an obligation to obey them.<sup>69</sup> The classic exemplar of this argument is the historical linkage between democratic power relations and state revenue. By virtue of their ability to secure the consent and trust of the tax-payer and bond-holder, representative governments have been able to collect taxes and secure loans more efficiently than their non-democratic rivals.<sup>70</sup> In this view, democratically inclined governments—although constrained in their freedom of action—dispose of greater infrastructural power and are able to pursue a more mobilizational type of rule.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Charles Tilly (1998) "Where Do Rights Come From?" in Theda Skocpol ed., *Democracy, Revolution, & History*. Cornell University Press: 55-72; Charles Tilly (1992) *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1992*. Blackwell Publishers: 102-3.

<sup>65</sup> Douglass C. North & Barry R. Weingast (1989) "Constitutions and Commitment: the Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England," *The Journal of Economic History*, XLIX, 4 (December): 803-32.

<sup>66</sup> Mann 1988: 5 [*emphasis in the original*].

<sup>67</sup> Peter Evans (1995) *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformations*. Princeton University Press: 12.

<sup>68</sup> Donald K. Crone (1988) "States, Social Elites, and Government Capacity in South Asia," *World Politics*, 40, 2 (January): 252-68: 254-8.

<sup>69</sup> For arguments along these lines, see Margaret Levi (1997) *Consent, Dissent, and Patriotism*. Cambridge University Press: 16-21, 214-17; see also Michael Burawoy (1979) *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism*. University of Chicago Press: 27, 223-4 [*fn 26*].

<sup>70</sup> Philip T. Hoffman & Kathryn Norberg (1994) "Conclusion" in Philip T. Hoffman & Kathryn Norberg eds., *Fiscal Crises, Liberty, and Representative Government, 1450-1789*. Stanford University Press: 299-310; Margaret Levi (1988) *Of Rule and Revenue*. University of California Press: *esp.* 175-84.

<sup>71</sup> John A. Hall (1994) *Coercion & Consent: Studies on the Modern State*. Polity Press: 3; Mann (1988): 7.



### 1.3.2 AUTOCRACY & NEGLECTFUL RULE

By contrast, the ‘authoritarian’ regime type reflects state-society relationships where bargaining and binding are evident more in the breach than the observance. In such settings, the ruled have few means of making binding demands of their rulers—especially as power is concentrated rather than divided. Political authority tends to be personalized rather than institutionalized.<sup>72</sup> Incumbent governments seek to monopolize their position and avoid removal.<sup>73</sup> Only a narrow range of interests are likely to receive representation, and even these will have few means of demanding accountability from incumbents.<sup>74</sup>

Despite claims that authoritarian governments are more able to pursue long-term projects of state-construction, nation-building and economic development,<sup>75</sup> in the Middle East autocracy and under-development are closely associated.<sup>76</sup> While such governments are likely to have considerable *despotic power*—“the range of actions which the elite is empowered to undertake without routine, institutionalized negotiations with civil society groups”<sup>77</sup>—it is in inverse relation to their infrastructural capacity. Indeed, there appears to be a pronounced affinity between authoritarianism, non-interventionism and state incompetence more generally. Such neglectful rule has three aspects.

#### A. STATE-SOCIETY DISENGAGEMENT

If the ideal type of the democratic state is “of one enmeshed in the processes and structures of society,” then it follows that states organized along non-democratic lines are likely to be considerably less engaged with the societies they rule.<sup>78</sup> Governments ruling unilaterally, by definition lack institutionalized channels of negotiation with the ruled. Having suppressed or pre-empted the intermediate organizations by which society might make demands of them, they have also eliminated a crucial means of governance over society.<sup>79</sup> Clientelist ties while unmatched as strategies of despotic power, are insufficient “to reach down

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<sup>72</sup> Christopher Clapham (1985) *Third World Politics: An Introduction*. University of Wisconsin Press: 44-59; Robert H. Jackson & Carl G. Rosberg (1982) *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant*. University of California Press: esp. 1-82.

<sup>73</sup> Lawson (1993): 192-5.

<sup>74</sup> Juan J. Linz (1970) “An Authoritarian Regime: Spain” in Erik Allardt & Stein Rokkan eds., *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology*. Free Press: 255-7.

<sup>75</sup> For a good summary of an extensive literature, see Georg Sørensen (1993) *Democracy and Democratization: Processes and Prospects in a Changing World*. Westview Press: 63-89.

<sup>76</sup> This linkage is evident in the various editions of the *Arab Human Development Report* published since 2002.

<sup>77</sup> Mann (1988): 5 [*emphasis in the original*].

<sup>78</sup> Sami Zubaida (1993) *Islam, the People and the State: Essays on Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East*, revised pbk. ed. I.B. Tauris: 125.

<sup>79</sup> Grace E. Goodell (1986) *The Elementary Structures of Political Life: Rural Development in Pahlavi Iran*. Oxford University Press: 197-9, 227-30, 246-9.

effectively into the population.”<sup>80</sup> Hence autocratic governments must rely more on coercive methods of rule—relatively inefficient because of their high transaction costs<sup>81</sup>—to achieve their goals.<sup>82</sup> Despotism, however subtly exercised, does not translate into infrastructural capacity.<sup>83</sup>

Consequently, Middle Eastern states of an authoritarian persuasion have usually managed only to penetrate partially or annex parts of the societies they control “from the outside.”<sup>84</sup> They have tended to be “centralized and concentrated in the capital city only.”<sup>85</sup> Their modernization efforts have resulted in self-contained infrastructures—edifice-like projects which fetishize the process of planning and development—with little connection to the societies they are supposed to symbolize and serve.<sup>86</sup> In such a setting, state and society represent “two separate social worlds deliberately avoiding communication or exchange across the no man’s land between them [...] At best each tolerated the other’s presence when necessary, the less frequent the better.”<sup>87</sup>

Such states tend to rule indirectly, supporting allies or clients with access in particular locales to act on their behalf with respect to the routine tasks of internal security, law enforcement and tax collection.<sup>88</sup> Such intermediary elements may act as much to benefit themselves as on behalf of the central state.<sup>89</sup> Authoritarian rule may also entail a substantial degree of top-down indifference as suggested in the emergence and persistence of “informal” socio-economic sectors—in some cases exceeding the size of those regulated by the state.<sup>90</sup> Their existence reflects

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<sup>80</sup> Robert Springborg (1975) “Patterns of Association in the Egyptian Political Elite” in George Lenczowski ed., *Political Elites in the Middle East*. American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research: 106.

<sup>81</sup> Levi (1988): 2.

<sup>82</sup> Crone (1988): 256-7.

<sup>83</sup> Karen Barkey & Sunita Parikh (1991) “Comparative Perspectives on the State,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 17: 538-9; Crone (1988): 254-8.

<sup>84</sup> Nazih Ayubi (1995) *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*. I.B. Tauris: 447.

<sup>85</sup> Mamoun Fandy (1994a) “Tribe Vs. Islam: The Post-Colonial Arab State and the Democratic Imperative,” *Middle East Policy*, 3, 2: 47.

<sup>86</sup> Goodell (1986): 177-9.

<sup>87</sup> Goodell (1986): 156-7.

<sup>88</sup> Alain Roussillon (1998) “Republic Egypt Interpreted: Revolution and Beyond” in M.W. Daly ed., *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 2, *Modern Egypt, from 1517 to the end of the twentieth century*. Cambridge University Press: 391.

<sup>89</sup> Tilly (1992): 25, 105.

<sup>90</sup> Victor Azarya & Naomi Chazan (1987) “Disengagement from the State in Africa: Reflections on the Experience of Ghana and Guinea,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 29, 1 (January): 126; René Lemarchand (1988) “The State, the Parallel Economy, and the Changing Structure of Patronage Systems,” in Donald Rothchild & Naomi Chazan eds., *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa*. Westview Press: 161-2.

“people’s disengagement from the state”<sup>91</sup>—because of its incompetence or predatory character<sup>92</sup>—and perhaps a measure of tacit state acceptance, suggesting its instrumentality in the reproduction of authoritarian power relations.<sup>93</sup>

None of this denies that governments of a non-democratic persuasion may have considerable coercive power to fend off subaltern or even elite challenges. Yet the absence of consent and self-organized intermediate structures means that they lack the capacity to exercise easily any sort of top-down administrative fiat. Hence, as Juan Linz has argued, authoritarian regimes are characterized by an absence of “extensive and intensive mobilization of the population.”<sup>94</sup> Notions of highly penetrative dictatorship—for example, the totalitarian regime type or the “integral state”—are probably impossible empirically.<sup>95</sup> No purely autocratic government would be able to amass the necessary infrastructural power.

## B. PATRIMONIALISM

Insulated from the demands of society, the self-contained state’s infrastructural capacities are further restricted—or even eroded—by their despotic use in the service of the autocratic political order. This second aspect of neglectful rule is already the subject of substantial scholarly literatures on patrimonialism and clientelism, and so will not be discussed at comparable length.

In governments of an authoritarian persuasion, policy-making is often based on the exigencies of political survival—with negative implications for the strength of state institutions. For example, insofar as state regulatory capacities are used to reward supporters and sanction opponents, they become less effective in regulating society. The resulting atrophy may be a key part of the conditions of possibility for the emergence of informal social spaces from below.

Where power is not institutionalized and remains highly personal, a ruler or elite’s control over the state depends on networks of devolved patronage: strategically placed clients atop a “descending pyramid of ‘political subcontractors’” within the bureaucracy and perhaps stretching into the depths of society.<sup>96</sup> Such an informal

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<sup>91</sup> Abdelbaki Hermassi (1994) “Socio-economic Change and Political Implications in the Maghreb” in Ghassan Salamé ed., *Democracy Without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*. I.B. Tauris: 227; see also, Goodell (1986): 147, 152.

<sup>92</sup> Azarya & Chazan (1987): 108.

<sup>93</sup> Azarya & Chazan (1987): 130.

<sup>94</sup> Linz (1970): 259.

<sup>95</sup> Simon Tormey (1995) *Making Sense of Tyranny: Interpretations of Totalitarianism*. Manchester University Press: 75-6; Crawford Young (1994b) “Zaire: the Shattered Illusion of the Integral State,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 32, 2 (June): 247-63.

<sup>96</sup> Charles Tripp (1993) “Ali Mahir and the Politics of the Egyptian Army, 1936-1942” in Charles Tripp ed., *Contemporary Egypt: Through Egyptian Eyes - Essays in Honour of Professor PJ Vatikiotis*. Routledge: 50-4; 50; see also Adams (1986): 158-9.

politics from above, is usually fuelled by rent-seeking. It may include, for example, licit or illicit access to state resources—ultimately exhausting the state financially. State institutions used as tools of clientelization, moreover, are unlikely to serve as effective instruments of governance. The spoils of devolved patronage may also include opportunities to engage in predatory extraction *vis-à-vis* society. Such tolerated corruption worsens the state-society disconnect and constitutes another important part of the conditions of possibility for bottom-up informality.<sup>97</sup>

Finally, the exigencies of authoritarianism may undermine state capacity in yet another way. Besides coercion and co-option, authoritarian rulers maintain their grip on power through various forms of strategic manipulation.<sup>98</sup> They may, for example, balance their clients in the bureaucracy against each other so as to ensure that none become too powerful. Such strategies of divide and rule—again the subordination of the state to personal power—are likely to have corrosive effects on policy-making.

### C. RISK AVOIDANCE

Regardless of the despotic powers at their disposal, authoritarian rulers fear the societies they rule only imperfectly.<sup>99</sup> Despite their top-down efforts to demobilize intermediate institutions and atomize the ruled, the latter are not without means of resistance. Even where formal institutions and identities are systematically fragmented, otherwise unrelated individuals in subaltern communities may nonetheless be connected by “passive networks” of solidarity.<sup>100</sup> Such networks can be instantly activated as the basis for contentious collective action in the face of a common threat or grievance. Indeed, there is a small literature on the moments and opportunities around which collective action from below can gel.<sup>101</sup>

While autocratic governments may respond to such moments by force—re-establishing demobilization by means of repression—another strategy is *risk avoidance*: the containment or pre-emption of issues around which opposition might catalyse. On the one hand, authoritarian rulers may combine repression with the

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<sup>97</sup> John Waterbury (1976) “Corruption, Political Stability and Development: Comparative Evidence from Egypt and Morocco,” *Government & Opposition*, 11, 4: 435.

<sup>98</sup> For a discussion of some of these forms, see Joel S. Migdal (1988) *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*. Princeton University Press: 206-37.

<sup>99</sup> Robert Bianchi (1989) *Unruly Corporatism: Associational Life in Twentieth-Century Egypt*. Oxford University Press: 6.

<sup>100</sup> Asef Bayat (1997b) “Un-civil society: the politics of the ‘informal people’,” *Third World Quarterly*, 18, 1 (March): 63-4.

<sup>101</sup> For example, see Doug McAdam (1994) “Culture and Social Movements” in Enrique Laraña et al. eds., *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*. Temple University Press: 37-9.

amelioration of the putatively underlying grievances.<sup>102</sup> On the other, they may even sometimes refrain from action—retreating from apparent challenges to their authority—so as to avoid the risk of creating issues around which bottom-up mobilization might occur.<sup>103</sup> This tendency is still another, and perhaps the most crucial, condition of possibility for the emergence of informal sectors.

Of the three elements of neglectful rule discussed here, risk avoidance is probably its purest form. It is also the hardest to substantiate convincingly and hence the least studied in the state-society literature. Neither autocratic governments nor the beneficiaries of grievance amelioration have any incentive in publicizing what is, in any case, only an implicit *quid pro quo*. Risk avoidance as the absence of action is even harder to substantiate. Empirically, it implies intentionality on the part of state officials—perhaps even a rather sophisticated degree of strategic manipulation<sup>104</sup>—which is more likely to be imputed than documented.

Nonetheless, the concept should not be dismissed out of hand if only because risk avoidance suggests that even in non-democratic settings—without institutionalized mechanisms of state-society bargaining—social forces do have the ability to affect state policies.<sup>105</sup> Dissent and opposition cannot be dealt with solely through repression, but also require placation.<sup>106</sup> Even formally unaccountable governments must nonetheless be somewhat responsive to public opinion<sup>107</sup> and accommodate bottom-up demands, however selectively and instrumentally.<sup>108</sup> Hence the reproduction and durability of any hegemony—democratic or otherwise—depends on a certain element of inclusivity.<sup>109</sup>

### 1.3.3 THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Claims of an inverse relationship between despotic and infrastructural power suggest a fourth problematic:

*How can the authoritarian post-1952 political order endure if the state upon which it is based is weak?*

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<sup>102</sup> Henry S. Bienen & Mark Gersovitz (1986) “Consumer Subsidy Cuts, Violence, and Political Stability,” *Comparative Politics*, 19, 1 (October): 33-4.

<sup>103</sup> Bienen & Gersovitz (1986): 26.

<sup>104</sup> My thanks to Steve Heydemann for this observation.

<sup>105</sup> Marsha Pripstein Posusney (1997) *Labor and the State in Egypt: Workers, Unions, and Economic Restructuring*. Columbia University Press: 3.

<sup>106</sup> For example, see Robert Springborg (1981) “Egypt, Syria and Iraq” in Mohammed Ayoob ed., *The Politics of Islamic Reassertion*. Croom Helm: 41.

<sup>107</sup> I am indebted to Yoav Alon for suggesting this formulation; see also, Bianchi (1989): 6.

<sup>108</sup> For a Tunisian example, see Larbi Sadiki (2002) “Bin Ali’s Tunisia: Democracy by Non-Democratic Means,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 29, 1 (May): 74.

<sup>109</sup> Martin Carnoy (1984) *The State & Political Theory*. Princeton University Press: 76-7.

In other words, how can risk-averse autocrats presiding over states disengaged from the societies they rule and suffering from various pathologies of patrimonialism, acquire sufficient resources to coerce, co-opt and manipulate their opponents?

Unlike the previous problematics, this question has a more immediate answer: these states are also embedded in an international state system and global economy to which their rulers can turn for support.<sup>110</sup> They may “omni-balance,” using international alliances against domestic opponents.<sup>111</sup> They can also pursue “internationalizing” policies, attempting to pass the costs of war preparation or economic development on to their external patrons.<sup>112</sup> Such embeddedness in the international system has helped sustain authoritarianism in the developing world, insulating autocratic governments from the kinds of pressures that historically necessitated state-society engagement and facilitated democratization in the West.<sup>113</sup>

In the Middle-East politics literature, an ideal type of such dependency is the so-called “rentier” or “distributive state.”<sup>114</sup> These states are typified by their direct access to high levels of income—most classically from oil exports but other kinds of revenue may play a similar role—from outside the domestic economy. Such rent flows have often negative consequences for their recipients. They may for example, undermine the productive sectors of domestic economy—the so-called “resource curse.”<sup>115</sup> External income, moreover, can “eliminate the need for domestic extraction and taxation” and hence the institution-building and social-bargaining practices that accompany it.<sup>116</sup> The result is states with the appearance of infrastructural power—substantial revenues to fund state-building and economic development—but which nonetheless remain disconnected from the societies they rule with only a limited capacity to intervene in them.<sup>117</sup>

Perhaps most importantly, however, exogenous rents are commonly viewed as enhancing the unilateral and despotic powers of authoritarian rulers. By

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<sup>110</sup> Theda Skocpol (1994) *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*. Cambridge University Press: 30-1.

<sup>111</sup> Steven R. David (1991) *Choosing Sides: Alignment and Realignment in the Third World*. Johns Hopkins University Press: esp. 6-8, 55-96.

<sup>112</sup> Michael N. Barnett (1993) *Confronting the Costs of War: Military Power, State, and Society in Egypt and Israel*. Princeton University Press: 33-4.

<sup>113</sup> Tilly (1992): 192-227.

<sup>114</sup> For the best overall account of the paradigm, see Dirk Vandewalle (1998) *Libya Since Independence: Oil and State-Building*. Cornell University Press: 17-38

<sup>115</sup> For a good summary of the literature on this issue, see Michael L. Ross (1999) “The Political Economy of the Resource Curse,” *World Politics*, 51, 2 (January): 297-322.

<sup>116</sup> Vandewalle (1998): 21.

<sup>117</sup> Vandewalle (1998): 23, 33-8; see also Kiren Aziz Chaudhry (1989) “The Price of Wealth: Business and State in Labor Remittance and Oil Economies,” *International Organization*, 43, 1 (Winter): 119.

substituting for domestic taxation, they sever the putative link between taxation and representation at the heart of democracy as state-society bargaining. Such income flows may further fund the instruments of coercion and strategies of co-optation, whether understood as ‘buying’ acquiescence or inducing dependency. Finally, rents may facilitate social atomization, by making the pursuit of state-controlled spoils the principal goal of bottom-up political action.<sup>118</sup>

## 1.4 THE POST-1952 ORDER

The next two sections explore the linkages between durable authoritarianism and state inaction in Egypt, beginning with the strong ‘despotic’ side of the political order put in place after 1952. While many accounts emphasize the apparent divergences between Egypt’s three subsequent governments—especially between those of Nasser and Sadat—this discussion stresses the continuities.

For example, the regime has long been characterized by the monopolization of power in the upper echelons of the executive with the president at the apex of the system and other centres of power—for example the military and the bureaucratic elite—in more subordinate roles. Its internal politics are highly informal. Nonetheless, since Sadat’s ostensible political opening in the mid 1970s, this durable autocracy has been thinly disguised by means of selective liberalization and the *façade* of multi-party politics. Successive governments have maintained top-down control over Egyptian society by various means, most notably the state’s clientelization of it. Finally, although students of Egyptian politics have tended to downplay the significance of ideology, governments have long sought to justify their policies in the idiom of top-down modernism.

### 1.4.1 MONOPOLIZING THE POLITICAL

The Free Officers’ seizure of power marked an end to the pluralism, competition and fragmentation characterizing the inter-war era. Even before Nasser’s consolidation of personal power, they had disbanded the monarchy, ended parliamentary government and sought to constrain the judiciary.<sup>119</sup> Parliament was recreated in 1957—Sadat renamed it the Maglis al-Sha‘b (People’s Assembly) in 1971—and Nasser’s government did not attempt to negate the judiciary’s formal

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<sup>118</sup> For a good summary of the literature on this issue, see Michael L. Ross (2001) “Does Oil Hinder Democracy,” *World Politics*, 53, 3: 325-61.

<sup>119</sup> Kirk Beattie (1994) *Egypt During the Nasser Years: Ideology, Politics, and Civil Society*. Westview Press: 66-76; P.J. Vatikiotis (1978) *Nasser and His Generation*. Croom Helm: 129-34; concerning the judiciary, see Nathan Brown (1997) *The Rule of Law in the Arab World: Courts in Egypt and the Gulf*. Cambridge University Press: 75-6.

autonomy until its final years. But these bodies have placed few checks on the autocratic and often despotic use of power by the executive.<sup>120</sup>

#### A. THE REMOVAL OF RIVALS

Such a concentration of power required not merely the end of institutional checks and balances, but also the elimination of opponents and even nominal allies—such as the Muslim Brotherhood—possessing an independent power base.<sup>121</sup> More generally, Nasser’s government sought to undermine its rivals economically. Land reform, for example, was targeted at the upper echelons of the landed elite who had been close to the monarchy and staffed the *ancien regime* political parties.<sup>122</sup> Nationalization despoiled the investor coalitions which had also been active in pre-1952 politics, and might have supported Nasser’s opponents.<sup>123</sup>

While seemingly less despotic, the Sadat and Mubarak governments have nonetheless been ruthless when faced with direct challenges: for example, Sadat’s mass arrest of critics prior to his assassination in 1981 and Mubarak’s suppression of the Islamist militants in the 1990s.<sup>124</sup>

#### B. THE INSTRUMENTS OF CONTROL

Egypt’s governments have used various means to suppress opposition and assert top-down control, including most obviously “strong military, security and intelligence services which extend Cairo’s control to the most distant villages.”<sup>125</sup> Through the mid 1970s, the Nasser and Sadat governments relied on pseudo mass parties—such as the Arab Socialist Union (ASU)—and corporatist bodies to clientelize and demobilize Egyptian society.<sup>126</sup> Since then, the ruling party, the National Democratic party since 1978, has played a similar role.<sup>127</sup>

In addition, all governments have used the state bureaucracy more generally as a tool of control—perhaps helping to explain its enduring characteristics of

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<sup>120</sup> Beattie (1994): 123-4; Brown (1997): 84-92; Springborg (2003a): 186-8, 190-1.

<sup>121</sup> Beattie (1994): 57-8, 81-5, 99-100.

<sup>122</sup> Waterbury (1983): 61.

<sup>123</sup> Robert Vitalis (1995) *When Capitalists Collide: Business Conflict and the End of Empire in Egypt*. University of California Press: esp. 208-14.

<sup>124</sup> Concerning Sadat’s crackdown on the opposition, see Kirk J. Beattie (2000) *Egypt During the Sadat Years*. Palgrave Press: 273-4.

<sup>125</sup> IISS *Strategic Comments* (2001) “Mapping Egypt’s Future: the Fading of Old Certainties,” 7, 7 (August): 2; Robert Springborg (1989) *Mubarak’s Egypt: Fragmentation of the Political Order*. Westview Press: 140-52, 170.

<sup>126</sup> Waterbury (1983): 307-53.

<sup>127</sup> May Kassem (1999) *In the Guise of Democracy: Governance in Contemporary Egypt*. Ithaca.



centralization and hierarchy.<sup>128</sup> Even its less explicitly coercive components such as the social affairs ministry, have: “sweeping powers [...] to license, regulate, monitor, and dissolve” voluntary associations.<sup>129</sup> More generally, executive domination of the legislative branch has given governments a host of nominally legal tools with which to punish opposition.<sup>130</sup>

### C. THE ATOMIZATION OF SOCIETY

Egypt’s three governments have used these various techniques not merely to suppress specific antagonists or curb protest more generally, but also to break down the organizational power of Egyptian society. The monopolization of economic resources and the restructuring of religious institutions, trade unions, professional syndicates and voluntary associations<sup>131</sup> can all be understood in terms of preventing the emergence of “autonomous collective organization”<sup>132</sup> from below—on the basis of which opposition to the *status quo* might be mobilized.<sup>133</sup>

Despite considerable shifts in the nominal political context, demobilization continues to be reproduced: nominal liberalization since the 1970s has not resulted in the emergence of autonomous social forces capable of bargaining with the state.<sup>134</sup> The political order remains one of coercion, co-option and administrative control, embedded in the institutions of the state, rather than one of consent.

#### 1.4.2 CENTRES OF POWER

Power is concentrated in a small number of centres, with few channels of communication to the vast majority of Egyptians denied meaningful political participation or voice.

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<sup>128</sup> For suggestions of this point, see Monte Palmer et al. (1988) *The Egyptian Bureaucracy*. Syracuse University Press: 24-41, 75-8; Samer Shehata (2003) “In the Basha’s House: the Organizational Culture of Egyptian Public-Sector Enterprise,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35, 1 (February): 124.

<sup>129</sup> Sami Zubaida (1997) “Religion, the State, and Democracy: Contrasting Conceptions of Society in Egypt” in Joel Beinin & Joe Stork eds., *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report*. I.B. Tauris: 55.

<sup>130</sup> Springborg (2003a): 186-8; for examples, see Kassem (2004): 33-5.

<sup>131</sup> Vatikiotis (1968): 371-2; for a case study, see Robert Springborg (1978a) “Professional Syndicates in Egyptian Politics, 1952-1970,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 9, 3 (August): 281-92.

<sup>132</sup> Theda Skocpol (1994) *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*. Cambridge University Press: 241.

<sup>133</sup> Diane Singerman (1995) *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo*. Princeton University Press: 13.

<sup>134</sup> For a demonstration of this point, see Robert Springborg (2005b) “Multiple candidate elections in Egypt: diverting pressure for democracy,” *Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE)*, <http://www.fride.org/Publications/Publication.aspx?Item=739>, 16 June 2005.

## A. THE PRESIDENCY

Nasser's consolidation of personal power in 1954 made the presidency the apex of the increasingly centralized state and political order. Formally unchecked by other branches, he and his successors have effectively been "presidential monarchs"—controlling the state via powers of appointment.<sup>135</sup> The patrimonial, if not potentially dynastic, quality of the post is evident in recent speculation that Mubarak may be succeeded by his son Gamal.<sup>136</sup>

Throughout his tenure, however, Nasser faced rival 'centres of power'.<sup>137</sup> He and his successors have relied on coercion, strategic manipulation, and patronage—the proverbial 'sticks, tricks and carrots'—to counter them and maintain *de facto* control over the sprawling bureaucratic apparatus.<sup>138</sup> Indeed, his successors have been so successful in doing so, that one recent observer wondered if "the regime did not largely boil down to the president alone."<sup>139</sup> Tellingly, Egypt's presidents have usually claimed to represent the "higher national interest" and sought to position themselves above ordinary politics as "supreme arbiter[s]."<sup>140</sup> They have sometimes disassociated themselves from day-to-day rule, especially controversial policy initiatives.<sup>141</sup>

## B. THE MILITARY

During the Nasser era, the officer corps inserted itself into virtually every state agency and played a central role in its political conflicts, through Sadat's consolidation of power.<sup>142</sup> Thereafter, however, Sadat seemed to demilitarize the state gradually, reducing the influence of the armed forces in all but a few key agencies.<sup>143</sup> Robert Springborg and others have further argued that Egypt's armed forces have become 'enclavized' in an "autonomous military world"—including a parallel economy as well as extensive housing and service provision.<sup>144</sup> While this

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<sup>135</sup> Hinnebusch (1985): 78-91; Kassem (2004): 12-29.

<sup>136</sup> For a discussion of this point, see Robert Springborg (2003b) "Presidential Succession in Egypt: Praetorianism Diminished?," Unpublished working paper, <http://www.lmei.soas.ac.uk/publications/selectedwritings.cfm?navid=38>, 16 June 2005.

<sup>137</sup> Beattie (1994): 159-62, 225-6.

<sup>138</sup> Clement M. Henry & Robert Springborg (2001) *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East*. Cambridge University Press: 152-5; Vatikiotis (1978): 157-73.

<sup>139</sup> Kienle (2001): 8.

<sup>140</sup> Hinnebusch (1985): 119; see also Waterbury (1976): 432.

<sup>141</sup> Springborg (1989): 62; see also Ghannam (2002): 35.

<sup>142</sup> Baker (1978): 48-60; concerning the role of the Egyptian military in Sadat's consolidation of power, see Beattie (2000): 46-9, 66-73.

<sup>143</sup> Hinnebusch (1985): 125-31.

<sup>144</sup> Springborg (1989): 105; see also, Robert Springborg (1998) "Military Elites and the Polity in Arab States," Development Associates Occasional Paper No. 2 (September): *esp.* 3-8 [<http://www.devassoc.com/msword\occpap2.doc>, 31 October 2006]; (1989): 104-25.

can be understood as a means of containing their potentially wider political ambitions, it does not necessarily signify their complete demobilization. Instead, the officer corps may have learned to conceal their footholds in nominally civilian sectors of the state<sup>145</sup> and assert their interests using “methods of remote control.”<sup>146</sup>

### C. THE POLITICAL ELITE

The third major centre of power can be broadly described as the civilian elite. Sometimes labeled the “state bourgeoisie,” they are better understood as a broad coalition of dependent interests, including senior bureaucrats and public-sector managers; nominally private-sector businessmen; and large landowners.<sup>147</sup> Although constituting perhaps no more than 5 percent of the population, they are nonetheless important to the reproduction of the post-1952 order.<sup>148</sup> More significant here, however, is their distinctness from the *sha‘b*, the mass of ordinary Egyptians—by definition excluded from meaningful political participation<sup>149</sup>—who represent at least three-quarters of the population.<sup>150</sup> Perhaps more important, however, is the latter’s relative exclusion from state-mediated spoils and consequent impoverishment.<sup>151</sup>

#### 1.4.3 THE INFORMALITY OF POLITICS

As political authority is patrimonial, control over the state is exercised by means of systematic clientelism which tends to preclude more organizational modes of political action while encouraging such informal vehicles as the *shilla* (circle of friends) and family alliance.<sup>152</sup> The resulting style of politics is informal in a second

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<sup>145</sup> Beattie (2000): 144; Steven A. Cook (2004) “The Unspoken Power: Civil-Military Relations and the Prospects for Reform,” Analysis Paper No. 7 (September), The Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World, the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution: 10.

<sup>146</sup> Henry & Springborg (2001): 153.

<sup>147</sup> John Waterbury (1989) “The Political Management of Economic Adjustment and Reform” in Joan M. Nelson et al., *Fragile Coalitions: The Politics of Economic Adjustment*. Transaction Books: 41-6; for a critique of the notion of the “state bourgeoisie,” see John Waterbury (1991) “Twilight of the State Bourgeoisie?,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 23, 1 (February): 1-17.

<sup>148</sup> Timothy Mitchell (2002) *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. University of California Press: 286.

<sup>149</sup> Singerman (1995): 13-14.

<sup>150</sup> Saad Eddin Ibrahim & Hans Lofgren (1996) “Successful Adjustment and Declining Governance? The Case of Egypt” in Leila Frischtak & Izak Atiyas eds., *Governance, Leadership, and Communication: Building Constituencies for Economic Reform*. World Bank, Private Sector Development Department: 160.

<sup>151</sup> One study suggests that 88 percent of Egypt’s population “should be considered poor,” see Nader Fergany (1998a) “The Growth of Poverty in Egypt,” Research Notes, Almishkat, Cairo (January): 7.

<sup>152</sup> The most comprehensive treatment of this topic remains Springborg (1975).

sense. While taking place within the framework of state administration, the ends of such behind-the-scenes political action are less the governance of society and more the aggrandisement of incumbents. It hence stands outside, if not subverts, the idea of rational-legal policy-making according to explicit rules derived from processes of state-society dialogue and obligation.

A third aspect of political informality from above, is that clientelism is sustained by preferential access to various kinds of spoils. Insofar as this access is nominally illicit, it becomes a further mechanism of top-down control.<sup>153</sup> Hence the informal politics of the elite is intimately linked to opportunities for rent-seeking and corruption.<sup>154</sup> In this context, Sadat's *infitah* (economic opening) in the 1970s can be best understood as an effort to secure new funds for existing patronage networks and, indeed, an expansion of opportunities for predation.<sup>155</sup>

#### 1.4.4 FAÇADE DEMOCRACY

Egypt's putative political opening since the 1970s, has been more apparent than real, with relatively few implications for how the country is actually governed.<sup>156</sup> Political liberalization, for example, did not really give the citizenry power to make enforceable claims *vis-à-vis* the state, but is better understood as top-down tolerance on the apparent calculation that the widespread repression of dissent would be "counterproductive."<sup>157</sup> But such tolerance is always conditional, within so-called "red lines," and may be abruptly suspended—as with the "deliberalization" of Sadat's final years and in the 1990s under Mubarak.<sup>158</sup> Such cyclical openings and closures do not amount to a transition to liberal democracy.<sup>159</sup>

Similarly, the resumption of multi-party elections in 1976 never institutionalized a process of state-society bargaining. Few observers would claim that they might have allowed Egyptians to withdraw their consent from the Sadat or Mubarak governments, and install their opponents. Rather, they have served as a mechanism of depoliticization, with government tolerance of the opposition parties conditional on their accepting the role of permanent opposition and refraining from cultivating a social base.<sup>160</sup> Egyptians have largely concluded that political participation

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<sup>153</sup> Waterbury (1976): 431-3.

<sup>154</sup> Sadowski (1991): 118-40.

<sup>155</sup> Clement Henry Moore (1986) "Money and Power: the Dilemma of the Egyptian Infitah," *Middle East Journal*, 40, 4 (Autumn): 636.

<sup>156</sup> Hinnebusch (1985) 119; Roussillon (1998): 379-80.

<sup>157</sup> Mustapha K. al-Sayyid (1995) "A Civil Society in Egypt?" in Augustus Richard Norton ed., *Civil Society in the Middle East*, vol 1. E.J. Brill: 280-1.

<sup>158</sup> Kienle (2001): 143; Waterbury (1983): 388; concerning 'red lines', see: Henry & Springborg (2001): 160.

<sup>159</sup> Kienle (2001): 4.

<sup>160</sup> Hinnebusch (1985): 170-1; Roussillon (1998): 381-2.

“would probably not affect political outcomes and could, in fact, be prejudicial to their personal interests.”<sup>161</sup>

#### 1.4.5 THE CLIENTELIZATION OF SOCIETY

While the political order described here ultimately depends on the state’s capacity for violence, ‘carrots’ play as important a role as ‘sticks’ in its *quotidian* reproduction.

##### A. THE ‘SOCIAL CONTRACT’

The *étatist* development strategy of the 1960s constituted a framework for the use of clientelism on a nation-wide scale. On the one hand, the establishment of an expanded state and public sector—initially financed by sequestrations—allowed Nasser’s government to deny societal resources to “potentially hostile groups in the private sector”—and hence contain the indigenous bourgeoisie.<sup>162</sup> On the other, it provided the resources and context for state patronage including public education,<sup>163</sup> particularly at the higher levels, and employment as a kind of “social safety net.”<sup>164</sup> Between 1952 and 1970, the latter increased five-fold.<sup>165</sup> By the early 1980s, the state employed “about a third of the total work force” and paid out “nearly two-thirds of the total national wage bill.”<sup>166</sup> As diminishing resources, population growth and inflation eroded the value of these entitlements from the 1970s onward, they were increasingly supplemented with consumer subsidies.<sup>167</sup>

Such distributive incorporation has been labelled the “social contract” and described as an implicit trading “of political rights for the provision of goods and services.”<sup>168</sup> Yet such formulations are misleading in a number of respects.<sup>169</sup> As an instrument of power, such clientelism is less about buying acquiescence and more a matter of instilling dependency—obligating and thus demobilizing its

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<sup>161</sup> Springborg (2003a): 192.

<sup>162</sup> Waterbury (1983): 260.

<sup>163</sup> Carrie Rosefsky Wickham (2002) *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change*. Columbia University Press: 24-7.

<sup>164</sup> Richard Adams (2001b) “Nonfarm Income, Inequality, and Poverty in Rural Egypt and Jordan,” Policy Research Working Paper No. 2572, The World Bank (March): 16.

<sup>165</sup> Palmer et al. (1988): 4.

<sup>166</sup> Waterbury (1983): 244.

<sup>167</sup> Sadowski (1991): 159-60.

<sup>168</sup> Bent Hansen (1991) *The Political Economy of Poverty, Equity, and Growth*. Oxford University Press: 116.

<sup>169</sup> For an insightful critique, see Nathan J. Brown (2004) “Nasserism’s Legal Legacy: Accessibility, Accountability, and Authoritarianism” in Elie Podeh & Onn Winckler eds., *Rethinking Nasserism: Revolution and Historical Memory in Modern Egypt*. University Press Florida: 130.

beneficiaries.<sup>170</sup> State employees, for example, have been described as a “vast salariat in occupational and material thrall.”<sup>171</sup> The importance of dependency for the reproduction of the political order is evident in claims that it has blocked Islamist mobilization from below and isolated substantial sectors of Egyptian society from the opposition.<sup>172</sup> While top-down distribution does create bottom-up expectations leading to bottom-up protests should entitlements be reduced, these are best understood as struggles for access to spoils, and not as challenges to the broader dispensation of power.

## B. THE DEMISE OF DISTRIBUTION?

Its obvious political utility notwithstanding, observers since the mid 1980s have plausibly asked whether the Mubarak government retains the ability to fund distributive incorporation.<sup>173</sup> At least in part, state entitlements had always been subject to ‘natural decrease’, at least in per capita terms, by steady population growth and inflation.<sup>174</sup> But the Egyptian state’s apparent fiscal exhaustion in the 1980s, coupled with multilateral and donor pressure, led the Mubarak government to eliminate or reduce of various entitlements beginning in the early 1990s.<sup>175</sup> Nonetheless, energy subsidies benefiting the wealthy were at least partially preserved.<sup>176</sup> Moreover, as will be discussed in 6.3.2, the state preserved implicit subsidies on public services. Again largely benefiting upper-income groups, they are never recorded in government budgets—although their value may exceed that of explicit subsidies.<sup>177</sup>

Moreover, the Mubarak government does not seem to have cut back on state employment. Although the extent of privatization efforts has fluctuated and is

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<sup>170</sup> Abdo Baaklini et al. (1999) *Legislative Politics in the Arab World: the Resurgence of Democratic Institutions*. Lynne Rienner: 237.

<sup>171</sup> Waterbury (1983): 349.

<sup>172</sup> Gehad Auda (1993) “The Islamic Movement and Resource Mobilization in Egypt: A Political Culture Perspective” in Larry Diamond ed., *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*. Lynne Rienner: 387; Springborg (1989): 187.

<sup>173</sup> For examples, see Brown (2004): 130; Mariz Tadros (2006) “State Welfare Control in Egypt Since Adjustment: Hegemonic Control with a Minimalist Role,” *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 33, No. 108 (June): 238.

<sup>174</sup> Dieter Weiss & Ulrich Wurzel (1998) “The Economics and Politics of Transition to an Open Market Economy.” OECD Development Centre: 45; Wickham (2002): 36-62.

<sup>175</sup> Weiss & Wurzel (1998) 41-103.

<sup>176</sup> Galal Amin (1995) *Egypt’s Economic Predicament: a Study in the Interaction of External Pressure, Political Folly and Social Tension in Egypt, 1960-1990*. E.J. Brill: 54-5; Iliya Harik (1997) *Economic Policy Reform in Egypt*. University Press of Florida: 92-8; Weiss & Wurzel (1998): 43-53, 48.

<sup>177</sup> Richard H. Adams (2000) “Self-Targeted Subsidies: the Distributional Impact of the Egyptian Food Subsidy System,” Policy Research Working Paper No. 2322, The World Bank (April): 6, 31 [Table 2].

difficult to assess,<sup>178</sup> it seems to have reduced only its rate of increase.<sup>179</sup> Overall employee numbers have not decreased, and the state remains the major employer of non-agricultural labour and source of job growth.<sup>180</sup> Indeed, it also remains the employer of choice because of the continuing benefits entailed.<sup>181</sup>

### C. CLIENTELIZATION BY OTHER MEANS

Although the evidence remains ambiguous, some commentators have suggested that, since the 1970s, the social contract has narrowed into a relation mainly between government and the political elite.<sup>182</sup> Clientelization has evolved rather than ended.

While optimists may have hoped that Sadat's *infitah* would foster a bourgeoisie capable of bargaining with the state, both he and Mubarak guarded against this possibility.<sup>183</sup> The state's continuing ownership of economic resources, the pervasiveness of its controls and the increasingly rentier character of the Egyptian economy spawned a "crony capitalism" dependent on public resources and state-created rents, perpetuating the fusion of economic and political elites.<sup>184</sup> Whether framed in *étatist* or free-market terms, the state's clientelization of Egyptian society persists, leaving few social groups with significant resources independent of their access to it and reproducing the atomization of Egyptian society.<sup>185</sup>

#### 1.4.6 DEVELOPMENTALISM & THE 'EDIFICE COMPLEX'

While the post-1952 dispensation of power has been discussed so far in exclusively material terms, it is not without a normative dimension. Egyptian governments have often framed policies—such as those of *étatisme*—in terms of what James Scott has called "authoritarian high modernism."<sup>186</sup> This is the view that states can

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<sup>178</sup> Henry & Springborg (2001): 140-2, 152, 165; Weiss & Wurzel (1998): 55, 59-60, 76, 120-33, 173-82.

<sup>179</sup> Ragui Assaad (1997) "The Effects of Public Sector Hiring and Compensation Policies on the Egyptian Labor Market," *World Bank Economic Review*, 11, 1 (January): 89.

<sup>180</sup> Henry & Springborg (2001): 141; Samir Radwan (2003) "Full Employment: The Challenge in the Twenty-First Century" in M. Riad El-Ghonemy ed., *Egypt in the Twenty-First Century: Challenges for Development*. RoutledgeCurzon: 115.

<sup>181</sup> Assaad (1997): 115.

<sup>182</sup> Hansen (1991) 117.

<sup>183</sup> Concerning the Sadat years, see Springborg (1989): 34-5; with respect to Mubarak's tenure, see Henry & Springborg (2001): 154-5.

<sup>184</sup> Henry & Springborg (2001): 152-5.

<sup>185</sup> Henry & Springborg (2001): 156-60; Waterbury (1976): 432-4.

<sup>186</sup> James C. Scott (1998) *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press: 87-102.

achieve rapid socio-economic change—for example industrialization, urbanization or the modernization of agriculture—through a combination of technology, planning and administrative fiat. While such top-down developmentalism was perhaps most visible during the height of Nasser’s nominally socialist phase,<sup>187</sup> Sadat retained it in the nominally liberalized 1970s.<sup>188</sup> As will become evident in subsequent chapters, it persists amongst Egyptian officialdom.

Its persistence is manifest in the continuing Egyptian proclivity for costly ‘mega projects’, including: the Aswan high dam which represented much of state investment in the first half of the 1960s;<sup>189</sup> land reclamation schemes beginning with the Tahrir province experiment in the Nasser era and continuing through the Mubarak government’s Toshka initiative;<sup>190</sup> and the urbanization of the desert starting in the late 1970s (see 5.1.1C). Nominally intended to transform Egypt’s economy and society from without, the symbolic function of these projects has been to capture the public imagination and, more materially, provide a vehicle for the distribution of patronage.<sup>191</sup>

## 1.5 INCAPACITIES OF THE EGYPTIAN STATE

Having examined the strong despotic capacities of the post-1952 regime, it is now time to take up the state’s comparative lack of infrastructural power. Egypt’s turn to *étatisme* after 1952 is sometimes seen as consequence of its underdevelopment.<sup>192</sup> But it can also be understood, more contingently, as a means of rationalizing *ad hoc* or pragmatic decisions—usually related to the Free Officers’ and later Nasser’s consolidation of rule—such as the use of nationalizations to despoil *ancien regime* elites.<sup>193</sup> Hence the Nasserist state-building project of the late 1950s and early 1960s was primarily a means of concentrating despotic, rather than infrastructural, power. Ironically, *étatisme* may thus signify state “administrative weakness”—

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<sup>187</sup> Roel Meijer (2002) *The Quest for Modernity: Secular Liberal and Left-Wing Political Thought in Egypt, 1945-1958*. RoutledgeCurzon: 208-40.

<sup>188</sup> Ghannam (2002): 30-4.

<sup>189</sup> Hansen (1991): 153.

<sup>190</sup> Concerning Tahrir province, see Robert Springborg (1979) “Patrimonialism and Policy Making in Egypt: Nasser and Sadat and the Tenure Policy for Reclaimed Lands,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 15, 1 (January): 53-60; concerning Toshka, see Mitchell (2002): 272-303.

<sup>191</sup> Clement Henry Moore (1994) *Images of Development: Egyptian Engineers in Search of Industry*, 2nd ed. American University in Cairo Press: 159; David Sims, urban development consultant, interviewed in Cairo, 12 April 1998; concerning such projects as a means of distribution, see Springborg (1979): 56, 66.

<sup>192</sup> Joel Beinin & Zachary Lockman (1985) *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954*. Princeton University Press: 12; see also Vitalis (1995): 170-2

<sup>193</sup> Hansen (1975): 201-2.



stemming from the absence of state-society relationships of bargaining and binding—which precludes market-driven economic development.<sup>194</sup>

The linkage between administrative weakness and authoritarian power relations is evident, for example, in the previously mentioned mega-projects. Not only have their substantive results been disputable, they have not amounted to a development strategy. Indeed, they might be understood as a means of camouflaging its absence.<sup>195</sup> Another indicator of the autocratic state's infrastructural deficits are the historically low levels of surplus extraction.<sup>196</sup> While formal rates of direct taxation in Egypt have been quite high, its actual extent is quite restricted.<sup>197</sup> The overall share of direct taxation in total government revenue has been rather low at around 15 percent,<sup>198</sup> necessitating a reliance on less efficient indirect means.<sup>199</sup> What collection does take place is often arbitrary,<sup>200</sup> encouraging evasion “in every conceivable fashion imaginable.”<sup>201</sup> Another issue is political risk: the Nasser and Sadat governments generally rejected increased taxation and the imposition of other forms of hardship for fear of bottom-up reaction—especially in the absence of a political opening—preferring lower visibility indirect taxes.<sup>202</sup>

While high levels of top-down extraction require a measure of bottom-up mobilization, and inevitably entail a degree of consent,<sup>203</sup> Nasser's government deliberately pursued non-mobilizational strategies of political organization to preserve the monopolization of power and atomization of society. The various mass-party and corporatist initiatives of the 1950s and 1960s, for example, were all intended to contain and pre-empt the possibility of political action from below.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Kiren Aziz Chaudhry (1993) “The Myths of the Market and the Common History of Late Developers,” *Politics & Society*, 21, 3 (September): 247; see also: 252.

<sup>195</sup> For suggestions along these lines, see Hansen (1991): 153; Waterbury (1983): 298.

<sup>196</sup> Waterbury (1985): 65.

<sup>197</sup> Concerning formal rates of tax, see M. Reda El-Edel (1982) “Impact of Taxation on Income Distribution: An Exploratory Attempt to Estimate Tax Incidence in Egypt” in Gouda Abdel-Khalek & Robert Tignor eds., *The Political Economy of Income Distribution in Egypt*. Holmes & Meier Publishers: 134; see also, Steve Negus (2001b) “Taxing Sales,” *Middle East International*, No 654 (13 July): 18.

<sup>198</sup> James Bill & Robert Springborg (2000) *Politics in the Middle East*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Addison Wesley Longman: 315-16; see also Henry & Springborg (2001): 78.

<sup>199</sup> Barnett (1992): 98; Eberhard Kienle (2005) ‘Reconciling Privilege and Reform: Fiscal Policy in Egypt, 1991-2000’ in Steven Heydemann ed., *Networks of Privilege in the Middle East: the Politics of Economic Reform Revisited*. Palgrave Macmillan: 285.

<sup>200</sup> Kienle (2005): 284-9.

<sup>201</sup> Delwin A. Roy (1992) “The Hidden Economy in Egypt,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 28, 4 (October): 696.

<sup>202</sup> Adams (1986): 63; Barnett (1992): 89, 92-3, 97-9, 100, 109, 111, 119, 124, 127-8.

<sup>203</sup> This point is drawn from Levi (1988): esp. 175-84; Joan M. Nelson (1987) “Political Participation” in Myron Weiner & Samuel P. Huntington eds., *Understanding Political Development*. Little, Brown and Company: 151-2.

<sup>204</sup> Alan Richards & John Waterbury (1998) *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, Second ed. Westview: 312; Waterbury (1983): 311-12.

Despite limited experiments in the mid-1960s,<sup>205</sup> mobilization in the service of greater extraction was ultimately rejected by Nasser's government for fear that it might unleash uncontrollable social upheaval.<sup>206</sup>

As these examples suggest, Egyptian political history since 1952 provides ample material for the application of the neglectful-rule framework. The following subsections take up state-society disengagement (1.5.1), patrimonial practices and the debilitation of state capacity (1.5.2) and risk avoidance (1.5.3).

### 1.5.1 STATE-SOCIETY DISENGAGEMENT

Critiques of Egyptian state capacity often note that it is more apparent to observers than manifest on the ground. As John Waterbury observed in the early 1980s:

The great administrative pyramid is indeed there with a presence in every village, quarter, and factory in the country, but it has, more often than not, been appropriated by local interests, manipulated to personal advantage by its own personnel, and put to the service of those who can buy its favours and benefits. Seldom has it been the executor of the regime's will.<sup>207</sup>

The implication of this position, as subsequently elaborated by Alain Roussillon, is that:

The Egyptian state, despite the heavy, all-powerful "hydraulic" apparatus and the multitude of its agents, controls only the "main axes" of the country—the avenues and squares in the towns, the checkpoints between governorates and the course of the river; as to the Egypt of the villages, *harat* [alleys] and urban quarters, and still more that of the "spontaneous communities," *'ashwa'iyat*, mushrooming on the urban peripheries, it lives largely under a regime of self management [...].<sup>208</sup>

The following two examples illustrate such state-society disengagement. The first, looking at the negative developmental effects of intermediary notables in the country-side, illustrates the importance of indirect rule to authoritarian power relations. The second, focusing on the growth of the urban informal sector, suggests how the exigencies of authoritarianism create the conditions of possibility for a substantial social space outside the state's administrative purview.

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<sup>205</sup> Waterbury (1983): 321-3.

<sup>206</sup> Waterbury (1983): 37-8, 113, 311, 324.

<sup>207</sup> Waterbury (1983): 347.

<sup>208</sup> Roussillon (1998): 390.

## A. RURAL NOTABLES & AGRARIAN STAGNATION

The predilection for show-case land reclamation projects by post-1952 governments implicitly suggests their reluctance to address the “pre-existing and complex balance of local power” in existing cultivated areas, so as to modernize production.<sup>209</sup> Instead, land reclamation “represented, literally, a social tabula rasa, a broad canvas upon which the regime could sketch in the agricultural communities of the future. Nothing need be destroyed in order to build the new order.”<sup>210</sup> At least through the early 1990s, successive governments left the agrarian sector “to flounder along as best it could” without any reorganization—ensuring its continuing underdevelopment.<sup>211</sup>

The political significance of wealthier peasants is crucial for understanding the state’s neglectful management of the countryside. Nasserist land reforms—while decapitating the large-scale absentee landowners of the *ancien régime*—transformed this “second stratum” into the dominant socio-political force in the countryside.<sup>212</sup> Crucially, they have come to act as intermediary notables on behalf of the Cairo-based state,<sup>213</sup> ensuring that the countryside has not become a space in which to organize against it.<sup>214</sup> They have also supported the system of *façade* democracy, by reliably delivering the votes of their over-represented constituents to the ruling party since the first multi-party elections in 1976.<sup>215</sup> In so doing, they have preserved the depoliticization of the peasantry and acted as a counter-weight to potentially more restive urban areas.<sup>216</sup> In return, they have been “allowed to become the local overseer for much that the state undertook in rural areas,” and hence to be its principal beneficiary.<sup>217</sup>

The political utility of the rural notability as a mechanism of indirect rule helps explain why agrarian-development initiatives have historically been largely non-interventionist. In the mid-1960s, elements of the Nasser government—along with attempting to increase social extraction—sought to curb the power of rural elites, blaming them for obstructing reform and development.<sup>218</sup> But efforts to impose

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<sup>209</sup> Adams (1986): 33, 81-2, 127-8, 189-190.

<sup>210</sup> Waterbury (1983): 64.

<sup>211</sup> Waterbury (1983): 65.

<sup>212</sup> Adams (1986): esp. 78-97, 150-65; see also, Leonard Binder (1978) *In a Moment of Enthusiasm: Political Power and the Second Stratum in Egypt*. University of Chicago Press.

<sup>213</sup> In the 1960s, this was organized through the ASU, for example see Iliya Harik (1973) “The Single Party as a Subordinate Movement: the Case of Egypt,” *World Politics*, 26, 1 (October): 81; from the 1970s onward, see Kassem (1999): 75.

<sup>214</sup> Adams (1986): 159; Mamoun Fandy (1994b) “Egypt’s Islamic Groups: Regional Revenge?,” *Middle East Journal*, 48, 4 (Autumn): 615; Sadowski (1991): 60, 80.

<sup>215</sup> Baaklini et al. (1999): 224, 231; Cooper (1982): 233-4.

<sup>216</sup> Hinnebusch (1985): 62-3, 253.

<sup>217</sup> Waterbury (1983): 277.

<sup>218</sup> Waterbury (1983): 278-9.

direct rule over the countryside were abandoned in the government's final years—likely because of bottom-up resistance as well as the political risks involved.<sup>219</sup> Hence the state's failure to increase productivity and extraction from the agrarian sector probably reflects the close linkages between successive Egyptian governments and this important political constituency.<sup>220</sup> The exigencies of the political order contradicted the objective of increasing the sector's contribution to Egypt's overall development.<sup>221</sup>

## B. THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR

The state's disengagement from Egyptian society is not a purely rural phenomenon. It is also evident in the emergence of an 'informal sector'—including various economic activities as well as urbanization—in Egypt's cities. Such societal informality can be broadly defined as:

Those activities which are not officially noticed through registration and taxation procedures, and which range from small-scale business to sporadic individual and sometimes illegal activities. The contrast is to formal economic activities which take place within a visible institutional hierarchy or structure of some kind (a ministry, a form, etc.), which are licensed, and which (if appropriate) may keep accounts.<sup>222</sup>

Empirically, the concept has various referents, for example the channels by which—since the 1970s—Egyptians employed overseas remitted funds while avoiding indirect extraction by the state-controlled banking system.<sup>223</sup> Such remittances funded the establishment of a variety of small- to medium-size enterprises which—along with various kinds of service provision and self-employment—are neither effectively regulated by the state nor clientelized by the political elite.<sup>224</sup>

Although by definition difficult to grasp empirically, nonetheless the informal sector represents much of the private and *sha'abi* economy. Larger firms are likely to be public sector or crony capitalist.<sup>225</sup> The formal private sector is largely elite

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<sup>219</sup> Adams (1986): 154-6; Sadowski (1991): 79-80; Waterbury (1983): 282.

<sup>220</sup> Adams (1986): 78-9.

<sup>221</sup> Sadowski (1991): 42-8; Robert Springborg (1990) "Agrarian Bourgeoisie, Semiproletarians, and the Egyptian State: Lessons for Liberalization," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 22, 4 (November): 456-7; Waterbury (1983): 100.

<sup>222</sup> Nicholas S. Hopkins (1991) "The Informal Sector in Egypt: Towards an Anthropology of Work" in Nicholas S. Hopkins ed., *Informal Sector in Egypt, Cairo Papers in Social Sciences*, 14, 4 (Winter): 1.

<sup>223</sup> Roy (1992): 689-95.

<sup>224</sup> Mahmoud Abdel-Fadil (1983) "Informal Sector Employment in Egypt" in Richard Lobban ed., *Urban Research Strategies for Egypt, Cairo Papers in Social Science* 6, 2 (June): 57; Sadowski (1991): 227; Singerman (1995): 194.

<sup>225</sup> Nader Fergany (1998b) "Informal Economic Activity and Structural Adjustment in Arab Countries." Unpublished working paper, Almishkat Centre for Research, Egypt: 13.

dominated.<sup>226</sup> Not surprisingly, estimations of its size have been subject to considerable variance and scholarly contention.<sup>227</sup> Data since the 1970s suggests that the informal sector has employed at least 40 percent of the overall work force<sup>228</sup> and over 80 percent of private-sector non-agricultural employees.<sup>229</sup> Attempts in the late 1980s and early 1990s to calculate the informal economy's output, resulted in contradictory claims. One analyst reported that Egypt's national income would practically double were the contribution of the informal sector included.<sup>230</sup> Another study asserted that the informal economy accounted for between 30 to 70 percent of already reported Gross Domestic Product (GDP).<sup>231</sup>

Recent literature has interpreted informality as a consequence of ordinary Egyptians being relatively disadvantaged in their dealings with the state.<sup>232</sup> Cumbersome procedures and regulations complicate access to permissions, goods and services,<sup>233</sup> both a *de facto* means of rationing scarce goods and services as well as indirect extraction.<sup>234</sup> Part of the broader clientelization of society, they further complicate citizen-state interaction on formal-legal grounds, facilitate rent-seeking by state officials and constitute a kind of socio-political exclusion.<sup>235</sup>

Hence ordinary Egyptians may evade state regulation or devise extra-legal coping strategies to circumvent its constraints. While such informality might be understood as an "exit option,"<sup>236</sup> students of subaltern politics in Egypt have preferred to regard it as a counter-society—standing in opposition to the state and the elite-dominated political order. Asef Bayat, for example, sees it as populated by those who desire "to run their own affairs, without involving the authorities or

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<sup>226</sup> Homa Hoodfar (1997) *Between Marriage and the Market: Intimate Politics and Survival in Cairo*. University of California Press: 82.

<sup>227</sup> Mostafa Kharoufi (1991) "The Informal Dimension of Urban Activity in Egypt" in Nicholas S. Hopkins ed., *Informal Sector in Egypt, Cairo Papers in Social Sciences*, 14, 4 (Winter): 9.

<sup>228</sup> Singerman (1995): 176, 178.

<sup>229</sup> Alia El Mahdi (2002) "Toward Decent Work in the Informal Sector: the Case of Egypt," Employment Paper 2002/5, Employment Sector, International Labour Office: 16.

<sup>230</sup> Ibrahim M. Oweiss (1990) "Egypt's Economy: the Pressing Issues" in Ibrahim M. Oweiss ed., *The Political Economy of Contemporary Egypt*. Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University: 17.

<sup>231</sup> Dominik Ernste & Friedrich Schneider (1998) "Increasing Shadow Economies All Over the World - Fiction or Reality? A Survey of the Global Evidence of the Size and of their Impact from 1970 to 1995," Discussion Paper No. 26, Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA): 14, 41 [Table 3.1].

<sup>232</sup> Singerman (1995): esp. 5-17.

<sup>233</sup> Nazih N.M. Ayubi (1980) *Bureaucracy & Politics in Contemporary Egypt*. Ithaca Press: 280-7; Hoodfar (1997): 230; Singerman (1995): 165.

<sup>234</sup> For examples, see Harik (1997): 98-104; Sadowski (1991): 206-52; Singerman (1995): 218.

<sup>235</sup> Iman Bibars (2001) *Victims & Heroines: Women, Welfare and the Egyptian State*. Zed Books: 88-106; Hoodfar (1997): 230; Sadowski (1991): 265; Springborg (1989): 80.

<sup>236</sup> Albert O. Hirschman (1970) *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Harvard University Press: esp. 4, 21-9.

other modern formal institutions.”<sup>237</sup> While Singerman acknowledges that the informal economy does not represent an autonomous social space, she nonetheless argues that it may provide *shabi* Egyptians with the necessary resources to contest their exclusion and “promote their own political agenda.”<sup>238</sup>

A less populist interpretation, however, is that the informal occupies an ambiguous middle ground between the nominally regulated sectors of society and those zones explicitly branded as deviant or insurgent.<sup>239</sup> Although subject to routine harassment and perhaps intermittent sanctions, informal actors and activities tend not to be suppressed systematically unless they become highly visible.<sup>240</sup> In other words, they generally evade the law without being definitively branded as outlaw.<sup>241</sup> This intrinsically ambiguous position suggests that the category says less about the actors and activities themselves and more about the character of state regulation.

While the Egyptian state is not without regulatory powers,<sup>242</sup> its very heavy-handedness means that they must be deployed unevenly: “despite pretensions to the contrary, the state simply does not have the omnipresence that its policies would require.”<sup>243</sup> Their deployment may also take place according to implicitly despotic criteria with state agencies focusing on larger formal-sector firms and labour unions whose demobilization is more important to the smooth reproduction of political order.<sup>244</sup> Moreover, what limited state regulation does occur, may be sufficiently incompetent, arbitrary and corrupt as to provoke resistance.<sup>245</sup> Indeed, Egyptian officials may realize that they lack the means to address the structural causes of particular informal practices, especially where they are a reaction to their own policies.<sup>246</sup> Hence their efforts to sanction them may be largely cosmetic. All these factors suggest that informality embodies a degree of *de facto* state toleration.

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<sup>237</sup> Bayat (1997b): 59.

<sup>238</sup> Singerman (1995): 179; see also: 130, 240, 242.

<sup>239</sup> For an excellent general discussion of this, see Alan Smart (2000) “Predatory Rule and Illegal Economic Practices” in Josiah McC. Heyman ed., *States and Illegal Practices*. Berg: 103-6.

<sup>240</sup> For the example of the so-called Islamic investment companies, see Sami Zubaida (1990) “The Politics of the Islamic Investment Companies in Egypt,” *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Bulletin*, 17, 2: 156.

<sup>241</sup> Harik (1997): 195; Sadowski (1991): 226.

<sup>242</sup> For example, Brown (1997): 226.

<sup>243</sup> Mehran Kamrava (2002) “The Politics of Weak Control: State Capacity and Economic Semi-Formality in the Middle East,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 22, 1&2: 44.

<sup>244</sup> Kamrava (2002): 44. 46-7.

<sup>245</sup> Harik (1997): 76, 99-102; Singerman (1995): 209-10, 215.

<sup>246</sup> Harik (1997): 141-2, 144.

So while the informal sector clearly “expresses a certain resistance to state control,” such resistance does not inevitably represent a broader challenge to the top-down dispensation of power.<sup>247</sup> Rather the Egyptian state “maintains a strong presence in *sha’bi* communities” and makes ample use of its despotic power to ensure control and demobilization.<sup>248</sup> By virtue of its ambiguous legal status and dependence on state tolerance, the informal sector is particularly vulnerable to such sanctions.<sup>249</sup> Indeed, *de facto* state toleration may, ironically, give it a stake in the preservation of the *status quo*. While in some respects the informal may stand outside the clientelization process, it is nonetheless not immune to it. As noted earlier, some informal institutions and practices are intimately linked to gaining access to various kinds of state goods and services.<sup>250</sup>

So for these reasons, it is problematic to see the informal sector as a potential source of autonomous social power. The scope of the informal sector’s visible political challenge has been limited, with its constituents being least likely to engage in “openly political activities directed against the state.”<sup>251</sup> Rather than posing a bottom-up challenge to the post-1952 order, informality can serve to integrate the *sha’b* by other means. It is thus perhaps “diagnostic” of state-society disengagement as an element of durable authoritarianism.<sup>252</sup>

## 1.5.2 PATRIMONIALISM & STATE CAPACITY

The institutional ‘softness’ of the Egyptian state is not simply a result of its inability to penetrate Egyptian society. It is also a consequence of the internal logic of patrimonial rule, clearly illustrating the inverse relationship between despotic and infrastructural power.

### A. POLITICAL LOGICS

As suggested in the previous sub-section, the weakness of the state’s regulatory capacities may be a consequence of their being used as tools of political control. Such use renders them ineffective, or otherwise has negative effects on the sectors

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<sup>247</sup> Hopkins (1993): 108; Kamrava (2002): 49.

<sup>248</sup> Singerman (1995): 214.

<sup>249</sup> Concerning the issue of vulnerability, see Helmi R. Tadros et al. (1990) “Squatter Markets in Cairo,” *Cairo Papers in Social Science*, 13, 1 (Spring): 66.

<sup>250</sup> Springborg (1989): 81.

<sup>251</sup> Kamrava (2002): 43; see also: 44, 49.

<sup>252</sup> Concerning resistance as ‘diagnostic’, see Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) “The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Bedouin Women,” *American Ethnologist*, 17, 1 (February): 41-55; see also Kamrava (2002): 44; Smart (2000): 104-5.

of society being regulated.<sup>253</sup> For example, Nasser's originally "punitive" use of taxation might be seen as having institutionalized evasion.<sup>254</sup> Low levels of direct taxation in part result from the numerous opportunities for "discounts and exemptions" available to favoured clients.<sup>255</sup> Similarly, the use of corruption as a tool of political control amounts to an implicit tolerance of official misbehaviour.

This toleration (if not selective encouragement) of corruption reflects the fact that Nasser and his successors have always been careful to frame their autocratic rule in formal legality: what has sometimes been described as rule "by law" but not "of law."<sup>256</sup> Such strategic legality in the service of providing Egypt's rulers with pretexts for unilateral action is manifest in broadly framed, and conflicting laws,<sup>257</sup> and their selective enforcement.<sup>258</sup>

Such strategic use of the law contributes to a highly opaque legal environment where the boundary between the legal and the illegal is far from transparent, and the opportunities for arbitrary application are considerable.<sup>259</sup> In some cases, "it is difficult *not* to disobey the law."<sup>260</sup> Notions of the informal as extra-legal—as opposed to simply 'illegal'—suggest the extent to which state regulation is not legal-rational.

#### B. THE COSTS OF CLIENTELIZING SOCIETY

Moreover, the state's role as the anchor of a system of devolved patronage and top-down distribution has eroded its other functions. To begin with, by the late 1980s subsidies and salaries had exhausted it fiscally. Explicit subsidies alone amounted to over 50 percent of its revenues, driving budget deficits and contributing to both inflation and spiralling debt levels of around \$50 billion by 1990.<sup>261</sup> Although the previously discussed reforms to the consumer subsidy system had reduced this budget drain by the early 1990s, decades of the state as employer-of-last-resort has

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<sup>253</sup> For somewhat sarcastic arguments to this effect in the opposition press, see Mahmud Ghallab (1998) "'Master of Its Decision' Whips the Laws and Walks in Their Funeral Procession" (in Arabic) *al-Wafd* (5 February): 10.

<sup>254</sup> Giacomo Luciani (1988) "Economic Foundations of Democracy and Authoritarianism: the Arab World in Comparative Perspective," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 10, 4 (Autumn): 469; see also Roy (1992): 696.

<sup>255</sup> Kienle (2001): 8; see also, Kienle (2005): 284-90.

<sup>256</sup> Brown (1997): 241-2; Springborg (2003a): 186.

<sup>257</sup> For example, see Kienle (2001): 29, 20-1, 24-5, 47, 78-9, 94, 106.

<sup>258</sup> Kassem (2004): 34-5.

<sup>259</sup> M. Riad El-Ghonemy (2003) "Development Strategies, 1950-2001: Progress and Challenges for the Twenty-first Century" in M. Riad El-Ghonemy ed., *Egypt in the Twenty-First Century: Challenges for Development*. RoutledgeCurzon: 101.

<sup>260</sup> Singerman (1995): 214 [*emphasis in the original*].

<sup>261</sup> Harik 1997: 89; Giacomo Luciani (1994) "The Oil Rent, the Fiscal Crisis of the State and Democratization" in Ghassan Salamé ed., *Democracy Without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*. I.B. Tauris: 149-50; Weiss & Wurzel (1998): 22-3.



burdened the bureaucracy with unnecessary employees whose “marginal productivity” may be “negative.”<sup>262</sup> Their salaries “introduced a permanent exponential growth factor to the government wage bill,”<sup>263</sup> which in 2001 represented 35 percent of total public expenditure.<sup>264</sup> The dominance of such distributive expenditures has meant that state agencies lack funds for routine operations and maintenance, not to mention new programmes and investment.<sup>265</sup>

Such overhead costs, moreover, have not only precluded the modernization of civil-service and public-sector units,<sup>266</sup> but also eroded their capacity to fulfil their nominal responsibilities.<sup>267</sup> The bureaucracy’s pervasive corruption—in part, a consequence of low salaries—aggravates the situation.<sup>268</sup> It also helps exhaust state resources,<sup>269</sup> although some policies and projects have been mainly patronage vehicles.

### C. SPACE OF POLITICAL COMPETITION

The exigencies of authoritarianism may debilitate the state in still other ways. For example, Egypt’s presidents have maintained their hold on power by balancing competing factions among their subordinates.<sup>270</sup> In so doing, they undermine bureaucratic rationality and state capacity. Such tactics fragment the bureaucracy into rival agencies with little coordination. Subordinate officials are not given the authority to make particular policies (whether good or bad) actually work.<sup>271</sup> Policy shifts are driven as much by the need to maintain a particular factional balance as by the demands of the relevant issue area.<sup>272</sup> Hence in some cases, the political exigencies of authoritarianism have the almost inexorable effect of policy “immobilism.”<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Bent Hansen & Samir Radwan (1982) *Employment Opportunities and Equity in Egypt*. International Labour Office: 45.

<sup>263</sup> Heba Handoussa (1991) “The Impact of Foreign Aid on Egypt’s Economic Development, 1952-1986” in Uma Lele & Ijaz Nabi eds., *Transitions in Development: the Role of Aid and Commercial Flows*. ICS Press: 205.

<sup>264</sup> El-Ghonemy (2003): 101.

<sup>265</sup> Heba Handoussa (2002) “Employment, Budget Priorities and Microenterprises.” Paper presented at the conference on Employment and Unemployment in Egypt, ECES (13-14 January): 11; World Bank (1991): 115-16.

<sup>266</sup> Henry & Springborg (2001): 151; Springborg (2003): 193.

<sup>267</sup> Adams (1986): 112-13; World Bank (1991): 115-17.

<sup>268</sup> Waterbury (1976): 429-30.

<sup>269</sup> Sadowski (1991): 127-8.

<sup>270</sup> Springborg (1979): 49-50; see also, Bill & Springborg (2000): 13.

<sup>271</sup> Springborg (1979): 56.

<sup>272</sup> Robert Springborg (1982) *Family, Power, and Politics in Egypt: Sayed Bey Marei—His Clan, Clients, and Cohorts*. University of Pennsylvania Press: 164; (1979): 58.

<sup>273</sup> Springborg (1979): 53.

### 1.5.3 THE MANAGEMENT OF DISCONTENT

Coercion is intrinsic to the post-1952 order, not merely reserved for those seeking to overthrow it by force. The Mubarak government has deployed the security apparatus against opposition parties during elections<sup>274</sup> as well as in the service of policies such as land reform in the late 1990s.<sup>275</sup> Various observers have noted the everyday violence and predatory behaviour of those tasked with keeping order.<sup>276</sup>

Yet the state's routine recourse to violence does not mean that Egyptian society is entirely subjugated. There have been moments of what Bayat calls "street politics," in which shared fear or grievance—stemming, for example, from a violation of 'social contract' expectations<sup>277</sup>—has led to apparently spontaneous but explosive instances of subaltern protest.<sup>278</sup> They include the well-known January 1977 riots in Cairo, Alexandria and elsewhere protesting reductions in consumer subsidies; industrial unrest in the Delta city of Kafr al-Dawwar in 1984; and the 1986 uprising of Amn Markazi (Central Security Force) paramilitary police conscripts.<sup>279</sup>

In and of themselves, such protests do not directly threaten the reproduction of the political order; nonetheless, they could gradually have a more mobilizing effect on Egyptian society.<sup>280</sup> Repression is most effective when used sparingly, in an exemplary fashion, against relatively un-mobilized societal opponents.<sup>281</sup> For these reasons, the state's resort to violence is neither constant nor uniform. Particularly with respect to economic reform measures impinging on top-down distribution, Mubarak and his predecessors have also relied on strategies of containing and preempting grievance. Such risk avoidance has led Springborg to assert that "at moments of truth in confrontations with social forces, [the Mubarak government] is very likely to retreat."<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Kassem (2004): 66-71.

<sup>275</sup> Ray Bush (1999) *Economic Crisis and the Politics of Land Reform in Egypt*. Westview Press: 143-8.

<sup>276</sup> For example, Steve Negus (1998) "Who are the terrorists?," *Middle East International*, No. 573 (24 April): 10-11.

<sup>277</sup> Posusney (1997): 15.

<sup>278</sup> Bayat (1997b): 63-4.

<sup>279</sup> Concerning the 1977 riots, see Sadowski (1991): 154-9; concerning Kafr al-Dawwar, see Omar El Shafei (1995) "Workers, Trade Unions and the State in Egypt: 1984-1989," *Cairo Papers in Social Science*, 18, 2 (Summer): 22-5; concerning the Amn Markazi uprising, see Springborg (1989): 25, 101, 142-52.

<sup>280</sup> For an Iranian example along such lines, see Jerrold D. Green (1984) "Countermobilization as a Revolutionary Form," *Comparative Politics*, 16, 2 (January): 163-4.

<sup>281</sup> Eva Bellin (2004) "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics*, 36, 2 (January): 146.

<sup>282</sup> Springborg (1989): 61.

## A. AMELIORATING GRIEVANCE

The state reaction to economically provoked unrest often combines repression—directed at those perceived as leading it, exploiting it or otherwise explicitly challenging the state—with concessions addressing its causes.<sup>283</sup> For example, the 1977 riots only ended following the announcement that the subsidy cuts would be restored.<sup>284</sup> In some instances, new subsidies have been introduced to restore social peace.<sup>285</sup> While the same austerities may be later re-imposed, more gradually with less publicity, the basic point remains that Egyptian governments seek to forestall visible grounds of grievance.<sup>286</sup> A similar logic of concessions was evident in cases of labour unrest throughout the 1980s: the Mubarak government would break-up strikes and punish instigators while nonetheless quietly acceding to the broader demands.<sup>287</sup> It was even apparent within the military. When air force technicians staged an industrial action, “strike leaders were arrested, but the demands were met and the Air Force Commander retired prematurely.”<sup>288</sup> Finally, strategies of grievance containment may constrain the state’s use of coercive power. In some instances, the Mubarak government has provided medical attention to those injured by the security forces and prosecuted those alleged to be responsible for injuries or deaths in custody.<sup>289</sup>

## B. PRE-EMPTYING DISCONTENT

Egyptian governments have also sought to head-off potential crises by avoiding policies and decisions likely to precipitate disorder or around which bottom-up mobilization might take place. Whether or not such reasoning is ever made explicit, the potential for popular unrest becomes a significant factor in policy formulation and implementation.<sup>290</sup> In general terms, risk avoidance was evident in Mubarak’s style of leadership by means of “anticipated reaction, trial balloons, and remote presidential control” through the 1980s.<sup>291</sup> Ministers attempted initiatives, but then

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<sup>283</sup> For example, see Posusney (1997): 158-64.

<sup>284</sup> Hinnebusch (1985): 71-2.

<sup>285</sup> Sadowski (1991): 37, 159-60.

<sup>286</sup> Sadowski (1991): 165-6.

<sup>287</sup> El Shafei (1995): 24-35.

<sup>288</sup> Springborg (1989): 98.

<sup>289</sup> Raymond A. Hinnebusch (1990) “The Formation of the Contemporary Egyptian State From Nasser and Sadat to Mubarak” in Ibrahim M. Oweiss ed., *The Political Economy of Contemporary Egypt*. Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University: 196-7; Kasseem (2004): 165 [end note 66]; Springborg (1989): 147.

<sup>290</sup> For example, Singerman (1995): 127, 302 [endnote 23]; Springborg (1990): 459-60; (1989): 37.

<sup>291</sup> Springborg (1989): 62.

the government backed down and the minister was dismissed if there was too much adverse reaction.<sup>292</sup>

More specifically, it is manifest in the reluctance of Egyptian governments, since 1977 riots, to pursue the large-scale and rapid economic reform demanded by their western backers—for fear of the societal reaction.<sup>293</sup> In some analyses this reaction is represented as one of “inchoate popular wrath,”<sup>294</sup> with other analysts viewing it as the potential for “political mobilization” from below by organized labour and other groups disadvantaged by privatization and austerity measures.<sup>295</sup> In such analyses, economic reform is effectively a casualty of what one observer has called a “class standoff” in which the political elite “are not in a position to force the lower classes to bear all the burden for the country’s economic problems and undertake alone the suffering that a readjustment of policies would entail.”<sup>296</sup> Hence the Mubarak government insisted on a ‘gradualist’ strategy through the 1980s, amounting to little real change.<sup>297</sup>

While fears of mass wrath may be a partial pretext for shielding elite aggrandisement from reform<sup>298</sup>—this is the other half of the class standoff—risk avoidance is further evident in cases less explicitly related to western demands for liberalization. Strategies of pre-emption have been visible, for example, in efforts to delay the introduction, passage and implementation of the controversial land reform law in the 1990s.<sup>299</sup> Indeed, policy making in a number of sectors has long been characterized by the avoidance of clear choices between competing interests and objectives,<sup>300</sup> and a predilection for the proverbial path of least resistance.<sup>301</sup> In some cases, risk avoidance may provide an explanation for the routine non-enforcement of laws and regulations at the street level.<sup>302</sup>

Notions of risk avoidance are also obliquely evident in discussions of the relative benefits of democratization for facilitating economic reform while preserving social peace. Most simply, democratization would increase the variety of channels by

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<sup>292</sup> Springborg (1989): 46, 61-3; see also Harik (1997): 120-1.

<sup>293</sup> Sadowski (1991): 154-5.

<sup>294</sup> Alan Richards (1991) “The Political Economy of Dilatory Reform: Egypt in the 1990s,” *World Development*, 19, 12: 1727.

<sup>295</sup> Kassem (2004): 108-9; see also, Hinnebusch (1990): 202.

<sup>296</sup> Marvin G. Weinbaum (1986) *Egypt and the Politics of U.S. Economic Aid*. Westview Press: 148.

<sup>297</sup> Richards (1991): 1726-9; Sadowski (1991): 164-7, 253-5.

<sup>298</sup> Richards (1991): 1726-7.

<sup>299</sup> Robert Springborg (1991) “State-Society Relations in Egypt: the Debate Over Owner-Tenant Relations,” *Middle East Journal*, 45, 2 (Spring): 238-9; (1990): 459.

<sup>300</sup> Sadowski (1991): 297-8, 305-6; Springborg (1990): 459.

<sup>301</sup> Moore (1994): 65-73; Waterbury (1983): 231.

<sup>302</sup> For example, Steve Negus (2000) “Discrimination against...?,” *Middle East International*, No. 619 (25 February): 13.

which governments can gauge the public mood on potentially sensitive issues.<sup>303</sup> More interestingly, both Egyptians and some expatriate students of Middle East politics assert that liberalization programmes require a measure of political opening, giving greater voice to those on the receiving end of austerity.<sup>304</sup> In other words, securing a measure of consent from the governed might be the most effective risk-avoidance strategy of all.

### C. THE PLASTICITY OF AUTHORITARIANISM

Conservatively, risk avoidance may be understood as a practice largely internal to the political order. Amelioration of grievance may sometimes result from the aggrieved having connections to the political elite.<sup>305</sup> Moreover, in bureaucracies managed along hierarchical and clientelist lines, subordinates may seek to avoid potentially risky actions for which they might be subsequently blamed.<sup>306</sup> Hence the logic of patrimonialism is rarely absent, analytically, from the other elements of negative rule.<sup>307</sup>

Nonetheless strategies of risk containment and pre-emption are also illustrative of what has sometimes been described as the “plasticity” of Egyptian authoritarianism.<sup>308</sup> While governments since 1952 have hardly been accountable to the public, they have been nonetheless somewhat responsive to it if perhaps more in the breach than in the observance.<sup>309</sup> Especially since the 1970s, they have sought, however selectively and instrumentally, to accommodate bottom-up demands. Such “pluralist accommodation”<sup>310</sup>—equally deserving the label ‘class standoff’—gives the impression of a more open political order than is actually the case.<sup>311</sup>

Finally, accommodation speaks to the broader issue—already discussed with respect to the informal sector—that the reproduction and durability of authoritarian political orders depends, at least in part, on their inclusionary element. For example, the state’s policies of distribution and, perhaps more importantly, tolerance of extra-legal zones and encroachments—likely give the *sha‘b* a stake in the *status quo* despite their exclusion from its more formal zones.

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<sup>303</sup> Harik (1997): 26; Springborg (1989): 37; Weinbaum (1986): 151.

<sup>304</sup> Brown (2004): 130; Waterbury (1997): 143-4.

<sup>305</sup> For a suggestion of this, see Kassem (2004): 190-2.

<sup>306</sup> Shehata (2003): 124; Springborg (1989): 147.

<sup>307</sup> Bienen & Gersovitz (1986): 33-4.

<sup>308</sup> Bianchi (1989): 6; see also, Moore (1974): 217.

<sup>309</sup> Baaklini et al. (1999): 225; Singerman (1995): 126-7.

<sup>310</sup> Daniel Brumberg (1992) “Survival Strategies vs. Democratic Bargains: the Politics of Economic Reform in Contemporary Egypt” in Henri J. Barkey ed., *The Politics of Economic Reform in the Middle East*. St Martin’s Press: 89-90.

<sup>311</sup> Baaklini et al. (1999): 225.

Even the distributive conflicts briefly sketched out in this section may be constitutive of the system's reproduction or at least diagnostic of its durability.

## 1.6 INTERNATIONAL RENT & AID FLOWS

Although the previous sections make a convincing case that the post-1952 political order is strong while the Egyptian state is weak, this claim begs the question of how successive governments in Cairo have been able to wield despotic power, given its infrastructural weaknesses. As already suggested (1.3.3), this contradiction has been resolved at the international level through externally derived income and political resources. Such rent flows include the "Gang of Four": oil and natural gas; Suez canal tolls; remittances from Egyptians employed overseas; and tourism.<sup>312</sup> More political resource flows—sometimes labelled "strategic" rent—include credits, grant aid and diplomatic support.<sup>313</sup> After securing the removal of the British in 1956, Egypt nonetheless continued to depend on external backing, first exploiting the US-Soviet rivalry but ultimately becoming dependent on the latter by the middle of the 1960s.<sup>314</sup> Sadat's opening in the early to mid 1970s was less about succumbing to the blandishments of western capital, and more a matter of taking the US, Europe and the Gulf Arabs as the new patrons of the post-1952 order.<sup>315</sup>

Over the years, these exogenous resource flows have been substantial, amounting to \$59-85 billion—depending on the method of calculation—in the decade following Sadat's opening alone.<sup>316</sup> Nonetheless, Egypt is regarded as only a "semi-rentier" state.<sup>317</sup> Unlike the Gulf states, its relatively diversified economy has historically had substantial non-rent sectors.<sup>318</sup> At their height in the 1980s, 'Gang of Four' rents amounted to 40-50 percent of GDP—but may have since declined to as little as 12 percent by 2000.<sup>319</sup> Yet a purely quantitative account of these flows probably understates their political significance in allowing Egypt's rulers to pursue ambitious ends despite limited means. External income has compensated

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<sup>312</sup> John Waterbury (1993) *Exposed to Innumerable Delusions: Public Enterprise and State Power in Egypt, India, Mexico, and Turkey*. Cambridge University Press: 81.

<sup>313</sup> Richards (1991): 1721, 1727-8.

<sup>314</sup> Robert Springborg (1978b) "Khedivalism Along the Nile: The Strategy and Tactics of Egyptian Dependency," *World Review*, 17, 3 (August): 34-7.

<sup>315</sup> David (1991): 94; Moore (1994): 122.

<sup>316</sup> Handoussa (1991): 211; see also, Waterbury (1993): 81.

<sup>317</sup> Bradley Louis Glasser (2001) *Economic Development and Political Reform: The Impact of External Capital on the Middle East*. Edward Elgar: 13.

<sup>318</sup> Marie-Christine Aulas (1982) "Sadat's Egypt: A Balance Sheet," *MERIP Reports*, No 107 (July-August): 8-9.

<sup>319</sup> World Bank (2001) "Egypt: Social and Structural Review," Report No. 22397-EGT (20 June): iii.

for the various infrastructural and developmental deficiencies of the post-1952 order which might have otherwise jeopardized its reproduction.

### 1.6.1 'GROWTH WITHOUT DEVELOPMENT'

For example, 'domestic' growth rates have historically been a function, at least in part, of external flows and windfalls. In the 1960s, *étatisme*, state-building and average rates of around 6 percent per annum depended on assets sequestered from the private sector, limited amounts of grant aid and the large-scale provision of credits by both the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>320</sup> Similarly, the high growth rates of 9-11 percent per annum from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s were driven by the oil boom, the resumption of aid flows and, crucially, remittances, which by the end of the 1970s represented 80 percent of private investment.<sup>321</sup> Similarly, economic slow-downs resulted from interruptions in the flow of external income. In part, the economic contraction of 1965 resulted from the exhaustion of the various windfall sources of foreign exchange, mounting indebtedness and a decrease in the availability of aid.<sup>322</sup> Similarly, the downturn in oil prices after 1981 led to a growth slow-down and fall in real wages, incomes and expenditures.<sup>323</sup>

Such expansions and contractions suggest that that the domestic Egyptian economy is substantially 'circulationist'—in the sense of being "essentially structures through which the exogenous rent is circulated, rather than strictly productive sectors."<sup>324</sup> Growth is hence epiphenomenal, reflecting changes in the availability of rents and opportunities for rent-seeking, not the development of internal productive capacity.<sup>325</sup>

### 1.6.2 SUSTAINING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Perhaps most importantly with respect to the durability of the political order, externally generated income has funded the social-contract expenditures by which

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<sup>320</sup> Nazem Abdalla (1982) "The Role of Foreign Capital in Egypt's Economic Development," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 14, 1 (February): 87-90, 94; Handoussa (1991): 201-3; Waterbury (1983): 61, 66-79, 89; concerning US food aid in this period, see William J. Burns (1985) *Economic Aid and American Policy Toward Egypt, 1955-1981*. State University of New York Press: 121-3.

<sup>321</sup> Handoussa (1991): 209; Roussillon (1998): 377; Waterbury (1985): 73.

<sup>322</sup> Barnett (1992): 99; Handoussa (1991): 206-7.

<sup>323</sup> Richard H. Adams (2003) "Evaluating Development, 1980-1997" in M. Riad El-Ghonemy ed., *Egypt in the Twenty-First Century: Challenges for Development*. RoutledgeCurzon: 27-29; Radwan (2003): 119, 123 [Table 5.8], 124 [Figure 5.4].

<sup>324</sup> Luciani (1988): 463; see also, Michel Chatelus & Yves Schemeil (1982) "Towards a New Political Economy of State Industrialization in the Arab Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 16, 2 (May): 252-3, 255-7.

<sup>325</sup> Adams (1986): 26-9, 190; Chatelus & Schemeil (1982): 257.

the clientelization of society is reproduced.<sup>326</sup> Through the 1980s, moreover, strategic rent flows allowed the Mubarak government to put off reform measures as these distributive policies seemed increasingly unsustainable in the face of economic downturn.<sup>327</sup> For example, an American cash grant and diplomatic backing allowed Egypt to fence with the International Monetary Fund over the terms of a stabilization agreement.<sup>328</sup>

While the 1990s are frequently depicted as a watershed decade in which the Mubarak government finally embraced liberalization and cut social-contract expenditures,<sup>329</sup> in reality Egypt remained dependent on strategic rents.<sup>330</sup> Cairo's participation in the international coalition to evict Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, its consequent receipt of \$25 billion in debt forgiveness and substantial aid inflows in 1990-92 facilitated the influx of other kinds of rent flows and created the appearance of a reforming and growing economy.<sup>331</sup> But the absence of growth in the more domestically productive sectors of the Egyptian economy meant that the apparent reforms began to come unstuck in 1999-2000.<sup>332</sup> In short, the 1990s were not a decade of liberalization, but rather manifest the previously noted pattern of rent-driven expansion and contraction.<sup>333</sup>

## 1.7 CONCLUSION: RULE VERSUS GOVERNANCE

This chapter has argued that Egyptian state has "strong blocking powers," in the sense that Nasser and his successors have been able to rule with relative autonomy, suppressing challenges to their hold on power and demobilizing Egyptian society more generally.<sup>334</sup> But the exercise of power in one context does not automatically

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<sup>326</sup> Handoussa (1991): 212.

<sup>327</sup> Roussillon (1998): 374; Weiss & Wurzel (1998): 22-3, 32.

<sup>328</sup> Dirk Vandewalle (1988) "Egypt and Its Western Creditors," *Middle East Review*, 20, 3 (Spring): esp. 28-31; see also, Weiss & Wurzel (1998): 31, 41-2.

<sup>329</sup> Denis J. Sullivan (1992) "Extra-State Actors and Privatization in Egypt" in Iliya Harik & Denis J. Sullivan eds., *Privatization and Liberalization in the Middle East*. Indiana University Press: 31; Hans Löfgren (1993) "Economic Policy in Egypt: A Breakdown in Reform Resistance?," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 25, 3 (August): 407-21; Mitchell (2004): 272-3.

<sup>330</sup> Mitchell (2004): 276-7.

<sup>331</sup> Glasser (2001): 98-99; Alan Richards (1999) "Dilatory Reform vs. Making a Break for the Market" in Phebe Marr ed., *Egypt at the Crossroads: Domestic Stability and Regional Role*. National Defense University Press: 68-9, 82.

<sup>332</sup> Henry & Springborg (2001): 145.

<sup>333</sup> For a suggestion of such a pattern, see Brumberg (1992): 81-97.

<sup>334</sup> John A. Hall (1985) *Powers & Liberties: The Causes and Consequences of the Rise of the West*. Penguin Books: 35.



equal capacity in another.<sup>335</sup> The Egyptian state's developmental failures suggest that it has only "weak enabling powers"; these same governments have been unable to penetrate Egyptian society so as to generate "a large sum of social energy" in the service of their goals and have hence been reliant on international assistance.<sup>336</sup> That the state *rules* autocratically, means it cannot *govern*.

## 1.8 THESIS PARAMETERS

The analytical side of thesis having now concluded, subsequent chapters will be largely Cairo focused until the final Chapter 7. This last section begins the transition to the empirical thesis, setting out the parameters within which the examination of Cairo was conceived, researched and written.

### 1.8.1 THE VIEW FROM THE MIDDLE

On the one hand, the thesis is not a top-down examination of the workings of the Egyptian state in Cairo, for example a study of the housing ministry in its various configurations since the 1970s. Although the research included interviews with current and former government officials and visits to various state agencies, the political sensitivity of the *'ashwa'iyyat* topic with its close association with the Islamists and the likely difficulties in receiving research clearance ruled out an examination of 'formal' urban politics.

Moreover, the utility of such a ministry-focused study is debatable on various grounds. They include the fact that official responsibility for Cairo has been fragmented among at least half a dozen agencies, and that such bodies are sometimes mainly significant for what they do not do. Some of the most interesting things gleaned from repeated visits to a housing ministry research centre, for example, were its lack of activity and the disinterest of officials in dealing with informal Cairo. Such an institutional study, moreover, would not only have impeded consideration of those largely excluded from the formal political sphere, it might have had difficulty assessing the informality of elite politics.

On the other hand, the thesis is not a neighbourhood-level study, which has been the standard format for research on Cairo since the mid 1970s.<sup>337</sup> Such a project would have entailed challenges of site selection and access almost comparable to

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<sup>335</sup> David A. Baldwin (1979) "Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends versus Old Tendencies," *World Politics*, 31, 2 (January): 75.

<sup>336</sup> Hall (1985): 35.

<sup>337</sup> The classic example, and the only one explicitly framed in a politics idiom, is Singerman (1995).

those in a formal institutional study.<sup>338</sup> Although the research entailed visits to informal communities and an element of participant-observation, an entirely bottom-up orientation would have probably precluded the examination of state rule of the city as a whole. Such a study of a particular community's experiences and perceptions would have raised the inevitable issue of 'distinguishing the forest from the trees' and might have been more ethnographic than political.

Instead, the thesis stakes out a middle ground between society and the state. Its focus, in large part, on donor-backed urban-development projects gave access to various kinds of otherwise inaccessible data and something closer to a metropolitan-wide perspective. Such projects have a measure of *entrée* on the ground and are implemented in concert with state institutions, hence shedding light on the latter's top-down workings and offering some access to official papers.<sup>339</sup> Studying what went wrong with these initiatives often revealed the operation of informal political processes whether within the state or *vis-à-vis* Egyptian society. Moreover, many of these projects generated substantial quantities of detailed information about particular informal neighbourhoods and subaltern Cairo in general, far beyond what could have been learned in a neighbourhood-level study.

While studying these projects was not without challenges, they were relatively easy to research. In some cases there were extensive documentary materials available. Project personnel were often western expatriates, and willing to be interviewed at length.

## 1.8.2 SOURCES & THEIR PROBLEMATICS

Egypt fieldwork for this thesis was undertaken between January 1996 and June 1998. It was supplemented by subsequent research trips to the United States and France in 2000-2001, and additional data collected while resident in the UK. This research yielded various kinds of source material. Much of it, however, had problematic aspects and needed to be used with care.

To begin with, thesis fieldwork included visits to a variety of informal neighbourhoods throughout Cairo. Information collected on these trips was largely anecdotal and impressionistic—useful as background material, but difficult to cite explicitly. Fieldwork also included participant observation amongst a loose network of activists, lawyers and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—some

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<sup>338</sup> Singerman (1995) is only such study explicitly framed in the idiom of politics; see also, Evelyn Early (1993) *Baladi Women of Cairo: Playing with an Egg and a Stone*. American University in Cairo Press; Unni Wikan (1980) *Life Among the Poor in Cairo*. Tavistock Publications.

<sup>339</sup> With respect to the issue of community access, see Asaad Nadim et al. (1980) "Living Without Water," *Cairo Papers in Social Science*, 3, 3: 8.

associated with the leftist Tagammu<sup>c</sup> party—who sought to assist Cairo communities threatened with demolition. Not only did time constraints complicate this line of inquiry, it would probably have resulted in a more sociologically oriented thesis.

Research also entailed a series of semi-structured interviews with serving and retired Egyptian government officials and contract staff; the staff of NGOs involved with clearance issues, social welfare programmes and Cairo urban development more generally; notable or politically active Egyptians with a connection to the issue; as well as a wide variety of expatriates—some employees of western governments, others consultants—concerned with development issues in Cairo. Interviews with Egyptian government officials apparently concerned with informal Cairo sometimes foundered when it became clear that they had not actually done very much in this regard. Moreover, semi-structured interviews—there were no formal questionnaires—proved a less useful source of data than recurring and informal conversations with informants through which a measure of personal rapport could be developed.

The thesis also draws on a variety of official documents—including papers from the Maglis al-Shura and the cabinet's information and decision-making support centre—albeit of limited use. Although indicating the neighbourhoods slated for demolition and upgrading and giving some sense of the evolution of government concern with respect to the *'ashwa'iyyat* issue, they lacked detail and were hypothetical in tone. Another substantial documentary source, also of mixed utility, were clippings from both the English- and Arabic-language press. These included compilations of Arabic-language reportage—for example, on the *'ashwa'iyyat* topic between 1992-1996—and the reading of press reports with respect to Cairo's various pathologies more generally. This material was useful in terms of indicating broad themes, for example in the *'ashwa'iyyat* discourse, as well as supplying factual details. Nonetheless, it tended to be too vague and contradictory to serve as a reliable empirical source overall.<sup>340</sup> It is hence cited sparingly.

Perhaps the single most important source of information were the papers from the various urban-development cases—frequently consultancy studies by western firms—which were far more accessible and useful than Egyptian government papers. While the donor preference for western consultants is well known, nonetheless little relevant and purely Egyptian research or policy-related analysis existed during the period under consideration.<sup>341</sup> Hence specialized work on

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<sup>340</sup> For a pointed critique of the Egyptian press, see Springborg (1989): 193-7.

<sup>341</sup> For example, in 1979 AID cancelled a research contract with the National Center for Social and Criminological Research, "for lack of performance"; see RRNA [Robert R Nathan Associations] (1982) "Housing and Community Upgrading for Low-Income Egyptians," Final Evaluation Report, Project No. 263-0066, Prepared for USAID/Cairo: 15; see also, Galila El Kadi (1992) "Case Study on Metropolitan Management (Greater Cairo)" [draft], Unpublished typescript: 21; Weinbaum (1986): 36; personal communication, Delwin A. Roy, AID consultant (1970s), 17 February 2000.

virtually all of the projects considered was done by western consulting companies. Although project documentation rarely makes this point explicitly, the Egyptian contribution to these projects often seemed limited to nominal oversight and contracting. Such dependence on western technical expertise resonates with Heyworth-Dunne's observation of government engineering in pre-1952 Egypt that "it had really become part of the traditional system in the technical branches of the Egyptian service that serious enterprises are always undertaken by Europeans."<sup>342</sup>

But it was not simply a consequence of general underdevelopment, in other words the absence of Egyptians qualified to undertake such work. Project consulting in many of the cases under examination, was subcontracted to local Egyptian firms. Expatriate firms also employed Egyptian staff originally recruited from state agencies.<sup>343</sup> Moreover, in one upgrading project, government employees were very reluctant to attach their names to official reports—such visibility was perceived as potentially hazardous to their careers—and so generally left report writing to the western consultants.<sup>344</sup>

### 1.8.3 CAIRO, THE CITY INDEFINABLE?

General references to 'Cairo' or the 'metropolitan area', are a serious oversimplification. Not a single unit, the Cairo agglomeration is divided into three administratively autonomous 'governorates'.<sup>345</sup> Strictly speaking, the Cairo governorate refers to those areas on the east bank of the Nile south and east of the Isma'iliyya canal. Areas to the north, for example the industrial centre of Shubra al-Khayma, are part of the predominantly agricultural Qalyubiyya governorate. Neighbourhoods on the west bank of the Nile, are all part of the—again predominantly agricultural—Giza governorate (see Map 2.1).

Observers have long complained at this seemingly deliberate fragmentation of the capital. They note that while there are coordinating mechanisms between the governorates, these are so weak as to preclude region-wide planning and management.<sup>346</sup> One such commentator has gone so far as to assert that Cairo is ungovernable, "for the simple reason that it lacks a single government."<sup>347</sup> Such

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<sup>342</sup> James Heyworth-Dunne (1938) *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*. Luzac & Co: 145.

<sup>343</sup> For a particularly good example related to sewerage interventions, see ODA [Overseas Development Administration] (1994) "Cairo Wastewater Project, Egypt: Interim Evaluation," Evaluation Report EV 539, vol. 2: 55 [*para* C.2.6.27b].

<sup>344</sup> I am indebted to Nadia Adel Taher for this observation.

<sup>345</sup> Eric Denis (1997) "Urban Planning and the Growth of Cairo," *Middle East Report*, 27-1, No. 202 (Winter): 8-9; Sullivan (1983): 9.

<sup>346</sup> El Kadi (1992): 82-3; Sullivan (1983): 9; John Waterbury (1978) *Egypt: Burdens of the Past, Options for the Future*. Indiana University Press: 160.

<sup>347</sup> Sullivan (1983): 9; see also Abu-Lughod (1971): 222-30.

ambiguities can also complicate the study of the city.<sup>348</sup> Where specificity is required, the thesis will refer to particular neighbourhoods in their governorates, or as on the east- or west-bank of the Nile; the latter is also the frame of reference when discussing the wastewater network. More general references to the city include the entire Cairo governorate and those portions of the Giza and Qalyubiyya governorates which are part of the continuous built-up agglomeration.

#### 1.8.4 TIME FRAME

The periodization of the thesis, 1974-1998, starts at the beginning of period when western donors began to take a significant interest in Cairo's development. Its end corresponds to the conclusion of Cairo fieldwork and, more roughly, the last set of (wastewater) projects under consideration. Of course, this periodization is only approximate: the dynamics of urbanization and socio-economic development under consideration date at least to the 1960s.<sup>349</sup> As will be argued in the next chapter, state concern for the informal has reoccurred at least since the mid to late 1960s. More broadly, the political logics under consideration in this chapter apply throughout the period since 1952. On the near side of the periodization, the thesis will draw upon materials published as recently as 2006.

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<sup>348</sup> Concerning the complexities of assessing population levels in the metropolitan area, see Sims (2000): 2.

<sup>349</sup> Sims (2000): 15-16.

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## CHAPTER 2

### INFORMAL CAIRO: BETWEEN MARGINALITY & INDIFFERENCE

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In December 1999, the English language *al-Ahram Weekly* published an interview with the governor of Cairo, Abdel-Rahim Shehata, entitled “Conquering the Beast.” In a wide ranging discussion of the city’s problems—ranging from air pollution to traffic congestion—Shehata promised an “all out attack.”<sup>1</sup> He insisted that “there is no street in Cairo, even in the desert areas, which is not an open book to us.”<sup>2</sup> The interview has subsequently been cited as exemplifying a top-down approach to urban management which precludes participation by the city’s residents.<sup>3</sup> Yet there is also a more basic question: is such a technocratic approach plausible in Cairo? Are its streets really an ‘open book’ for those who would ‘conquer’ it?

By contrast, this chapter suggests that the Egyptian state’s rule over Cairo manifests the dichotomy, introduced in the previous chapter, between infrastructural and despotic power. The various state agencies concerned with city have been highly successful in securing it, and minimizing the possibility of any bottom-up political challenge. Yet their ability to plan and service it—tasks falling under the broad label of “governance”—has been more circumscribed.<sup>4</sup> These limitations are perhaps most visible in the informal-housing sector. Although sometimes pathologized as *‘ashwa’iyyat*, such communities are hardly marginal. In 1996, they housed over half of the city’s approximately 11 million inhabitants.<sup>5</sup> Public

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<sup>1</sup> Fatemah Farag (1999b) “Conquering the beast,” *al-Ahram Weekly*, No 458 (2-8 December 1999), <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/1999/458/focus.htm>, 27 June 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Farag (1999b).

<sup>3</sup> Ghannam (2001): 33-4.

<sup>4</sup> Concerning urban governance, see Ghannam (2001): 36-7; Roula Majdalani (2001) “The Governance Paradigm and Urban Development: Breaking New Ground?” in Seteney Shami ed., *Capital Cities: Ethnographies of Urban Governance in the Middle East*. Centre for Urban & Community Studies, University of Toronto: 13-17.

<sup>5</sup> This population estimate is somewhat conservative; for its basis and potential variance, see David Sims (2000) “Residential Informality in Greater Cairo: Typologies, Representative Areas, Quantification, Valuation, and Causal Factors,” report prepared for the Institute for Liberty and Democracy (June): 2; for a more recent estimate, see David Sims (2003) “The Case of Cairo, Egypt” in *Understanding Slums: Case Studies for the Global Report on Human*

statements notwithstanding, successive governments have generally ignored them. While Shehata came to the Cairo governorate in July 1997 as the man who had cleaned up the *‘ashwa’iyyat* in Giza—a claim which requires scrutiny—the state’s neglectful rule transcends individual administrators.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter is organized as follows: an introductory section reviews Cairo’s administrative and political centrality in Egypt, noting the means by which successive governments have secured it (2.1). The discussion then moves to the city’s considerable growth since the 1940s and the governments’ inability to cope with it (2.2). This policy failure is context for the informal housing sector’s genesis (2.3). With informal Cairo thus situated politically, next comes a critique of the *‘ashwa’iyyat* social-pathology discourse and the popular-agency approach beloved of western Cairo-watchers (2.4).

Most importantly, neither of them fully grasps the complexities of such communities, particularly in their relations with the state (2.5). While public discourse since the 1990s has constructed the *‘ashwa’iyyat* as an urgent problem in need of solutions, a more careful reading of recent evidence suggests that, since the 1960s, Egyptian governments have alternated between indifference, a desire to demolish and efforts to upgrade such communities. Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the key issue of state-society relations is not that of a modernist state seeking to impose order on a lawless informal Cairo. Rather, the relationship is better understood as a continual process of manoeuvre, lobbying and clientelism with respect to the top-down provision of urban services. The chapter concludes by reviewing the application of the neglectful rule framework to the Cairo case, so as to argue that the informal city is diagnostic of the post-1952 political order (2.6).

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## 2.1 ‘CONQUERING THE BEAST’?

Shehata’s insistence of capacity and commitment to tackling Cairo’s problems is hardly surprising. The city is Egypt’s undisputed administrative, political and economic centre, and a socio-cultural hub more generally. Successive governments have hence taken considerable pains to control it.

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*Settlements 2003*. UN-Habitat & UCL/DPU [[http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/Global\\_Report/cities/cairo.htm](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/Global_Report/cities/cairo.htm), 30 October 2005]: 3, 23 [note 2]; see also: Asef Bayat & Eric Denis (2000) “Who is afraid of *ashwaiyyat*? Urban change and politics in Egypt,” *Environment & Urbanization*, 12, 2 (October): 189 [Table 1].

<sup>6</sup> Steve Negus (1997) “The Battle of the Nile,” *Cairo Times* (4-17 September): 12.

## 2.1.1 POLITICAL & ECONOMIC CENTRE

The problems of Cairo [...] are the problems of Egypt.<sup>7</sup>

Cairo is not merely the capital of a highly centralized state. Credited with “an unchallenged role in all aspects of Egypt's national life,” the city also serves as its symbol and showcase.<sup>8</sup> One veteran observer has noted: “In no other country of the world does a single city dominate all aspects of national identity as does Cairo. In geographical terms, it is as if Cairo is a fulcrum upon which the nation turns.”<sup>9</sup> The state is not merely based in Cairo, it literally speaks to the rest of Egypt—on radio and television—with a Cairene accent.<sup>10</sup>

At the heart of the city's primacy, is the administrative centralization of the state. As Springborg notes: “virtually every unit of government in the country [...] [is] within a hierarchy that terminates in a minister or equivalent in Cairo.”<sup>11</sup> Hence Cairo is also the centre of the political order and focal point of “political contestation.”<sup>12</sup> To be outside the capital is hence often seen as exile,<sup>13</sup> helping explain the failure of top-down efforts, in the 1980s, to de-concentrate the city by re-locating state ministries to the ‘new desert cities’ (see 5.1.1C).<sup>14</sup>

The historical concentration of public-sector industries in Cairo since the 1950s has been explained in terms of the Nasser government's fear that any spatial dispersal of the industrial labour force—potentially susceptible to communist blandishments—would diminish state control over it.<sup>15</sup> True or not, the city's economic primacy is manifest in the concentration of investment, employment opportunities and consumption, well in excess of its 16 percent share of national population since the mid 1960s.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Palmer et al. (1988): 12.

<sup>8</sup> Dan Tschirgi (1995) “Cairo's Municipal Food Policy: ‘As He Gets More, He Can Buy More’” in Jörg Gertel ed., *The Metropolitan Food System of Cairo*. Verlag für Entwicklungspolitik: 27.

<sup>9</sup> David Sims (1990) “Development Benefits of the Cairo Ring Road and Associated Bridges,” Final Reported submitted to USAID/Egypt, Cairo (20 August): 2.

<sup>10</sup> Fandy (1994b): 619.

<sup>11</sup> Springborg (1999): 18.

<sup>12</sup> Springborg (1999): 20.

<sup>13</sup> Ayubi (1980): 125; Waterbury (1978): 128.

<sup>14</sup> As quite accurately forecast by Waterbury (1978): 128.

<sup>15</sup> Galila El Kadi (1990) “Thirty Years of Urban Planning in Cairo” (in French) *Revue Tiers Monde*, XXXI, No. 121 (Janvier-Mars): 191.

<sup>16</sup> Bayat & Denis (2000): 191.



## 2.1.2 SECURING THE CITY

Although students of developing-country politics have tended to regard the countryside as the more dangerous site of insurgency and opposition,<sup>17</sup> Cairo has long served as a stage for unrest linked to broad shifts and challenges to the post-independence and post-1952 balance of power.<sup>18</sup> Governments since the 1950s, have hence regarded the city as a container of “political menace” vulnerable to “mass violence” which could potentially bring “the nation to a halt.”<sup>19</sup> Not surprisingly, they have been preoccupied “with the negative aspects of control and security,”<sup>20</sup> evident in the “bewildering array of security forces [that keep] public order” employing perhaps as many as 100,000 policemen.<sup>21</sup> These include the Amn Markazi charged with riot control and often enlisted to support the demolition of informal areas<sup>22</sup> and the Shurtat al-Marafiq (Utilities Police), deployed by the governorates to enforce building demolition orders and clear informal markets.<sup>23</sup>

The state’s coercive and control capacities are also manifest in the three governorates responsible for Cairo’s local administration.<sup>24</sup> For example, the city’s districting is organized around some 40 police stations. In some cases fortified, they are the most visible state institution in many neighbourhoods—for the most part located in potentially suspect areas.<sup>25</sup> Within each governorate, most security forces “report to the general security directorate” whose chief “serves under” the

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<sup>17</sup> For example, Samuel P. Huntington (1968) *Political Order in Changing Societies*. Yale University Press: 77, 292, 435.

<sup>18</sup> Richards & Waterbury (1998): 266.

<sup>19</sup> John Waterbury (1982) “Patterns of Urban Growth and Income Distribution in Egypt” in Gouda Abdel-Khalek & Robert Tignor eds., *The Political Economy of Income Distribution in Egypt*. Holmes & Meier: 327.

<sup>20</sup> Sullivan (1983): 10.

<sup>21</sup> Max Rodenbeck (1998) *Cairo: The City Victorious*. Picador: 272, 277.

<sup>22</sup> For a description of its involvement in clearance operations, see World Organisation Against Torture / Egyptian Centre for Housing Rights (2002) “The Policy of Forced Eviction and House Demolitions in Egypt: A Form of Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,” report for presentation to the United Nations Committee Against Torture for parallel review in connection with the government of Egypt’s State party report to said treaty body (September); <http://www.hshr.org/housingevictionstorture.htm>; 13 August 2004.

<sup>23</sup> Nawal Mahmoud Hassan (1996) “Beyond Paradigms of Development: A Pragmatic Response to Housing Needs in Cairo’s Inner City” in Diane Singerman & Homa Hoodfar eds., *Development, Change, and Gender in Cairo: A View from the Household*. Indiana University Press: 137; Salwa Ismail (2001) “State-Society Relations in Cairo’s New Urban Quarters: Political and Social Life in Boulaq al-Dakrur,” paper presented at the Second Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting, Florence, 21-25 March, Mediterranean Programme, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute: 17-18.

<sup>24</sup> Nazih N.M. Ayubi (1984) “Local Government and Rural Development in Egypt in the 1970’s,” *African Administrative Studies*, no 23: esp. 70-3.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Hammond (1998) “Reining in the Police,” *Cairo Times*, 2, 1 (5-18 March): 9; Ismail: 371-2, 390; Sullivan (1983): 11.

governor.<sup>26</sup> Appointed directly by the president, governors have historically tended to be former soldiers or police officers.<sup>27</sup> The security aspects of the post are further suggested in cases where governors—for example, Hassan al-Alfi, Zaki Badr, Nabawi Isma‘il and Yusuf Sabri Abu Talib—have subsequently been named to the interior or defence portfolios.<sup>28</sup> While recent observers have commented on the apparent civilianization of the governorships,<sup>29</sup> evident in Cairo since the mid 1990s,<sup>30</sup> their subordinates may nonetheless continue to have military or security backgrounds.<sup>31</sup>

Yet Egypt’s rulers have not relied solely on coercion and manipulation. As one observer of developing-country urbanism has noted, “because the state is dependent on the urban economy, there are limits” to its use of repression.<sup>32</sup> Hence the disproportionate access enjoyed by Cairenes to subsidized commodities, services and national income more generally can be understood as a means of maintaining social and political peace.<sup>33</sup> For their part, governors have been described as “spend[ing] an exorbitant amount of their time dealing with the possibility of community and neighbourhood clashes and the ever-present threat of food shortages and administrative disruptions in the distribution of food staples.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Middle East Watch (1992) *Behind Closed Doors: Torture and Detention in Egypt*. Human Rights Watch: 29.

<sup>27</sup> For systematically compiled data on the professional background of Cairo, Giza and Qalyubiyya governors between 1960 and 1989, see Takeji Ino et al. (1989) “Local Administration and Center-Local Relations in Egypt,” MES Series No. 25. Institute of Developing Economies (Tokyo): 106-8, 111.

<sup>28</sup> Ino (1989): 107; Springborg (1989): 34, 145; Washington Report on Middle East Affairs (1993) “Issues in the News” (June); 22 [<http://www.washington-report.org/backissues/0693/9306022.htm>]; 24 October 2005].

<sup>29</sup> Gamal Essam El Din (2004) “More Professors, less generals,” *al-Ahram Weekly*, No. 700 (22 - 28 July); <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/print/2004/700/eg2.htm>, 1 April 2005; Springborg (1998): 3.

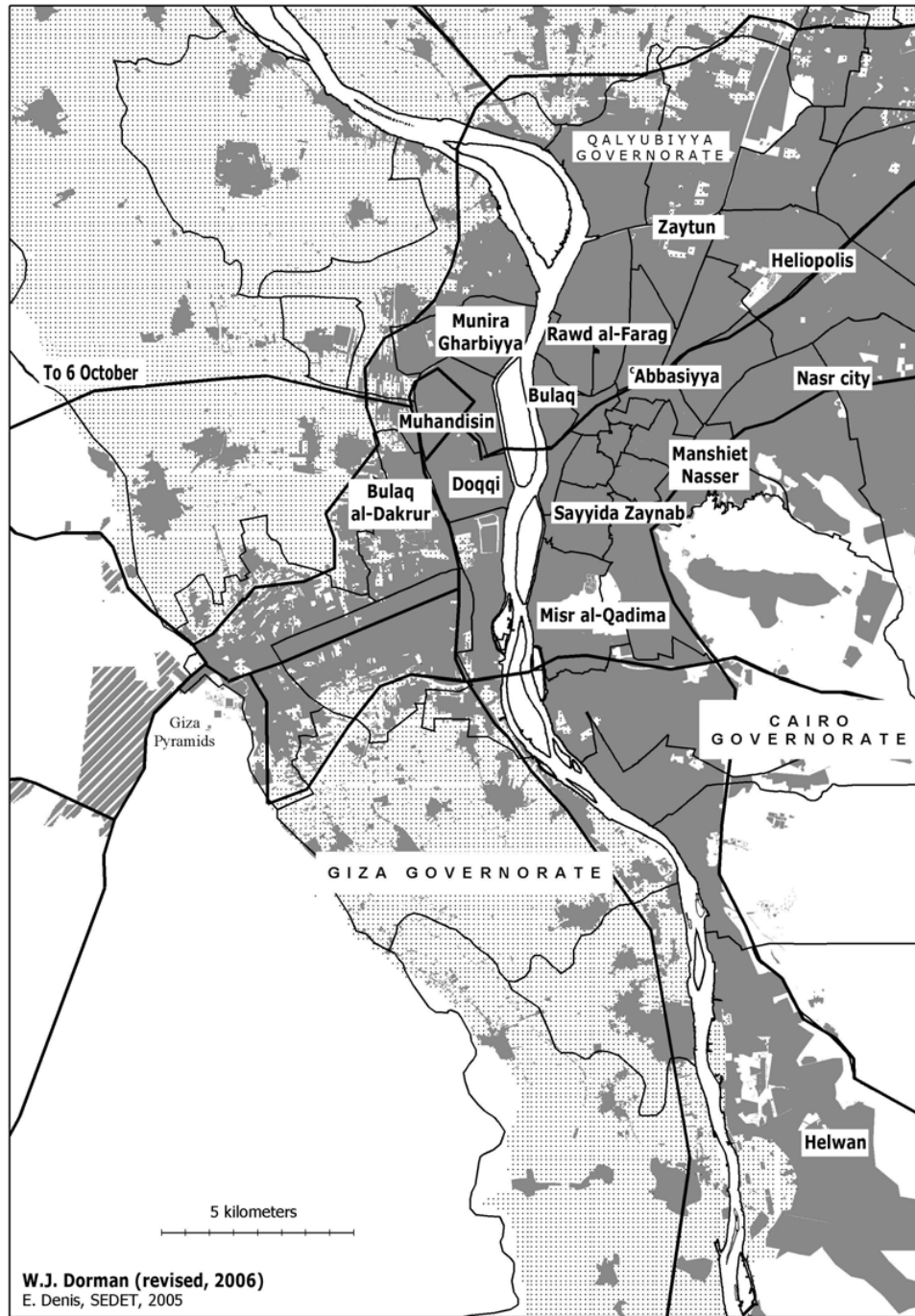
<sup>30</sup> Shehata—the Giza governor from 1993 to 1997 and the Cairo governor from 1997 to 2004—was by training an agricultural engineer; see Farag (1999b).

<sup>31</sup> Deputy governors and district chiefs are sometimes identified in press and consultancy reports with military or police titles. Such references, however, are not comparable to the systematically compiled data on governors provided by Ino (1989). Nonetheless, in 2005 roughly a quarter of Cairo governorate district chiefs listed on the arabdecision.org web site had such titles.

<sup>32</sup> Josef Gugler (1982) “The Urban Character of Contemporary Revolutions,” *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 17, 2 (Summer): 67.

<sup>33</sup> Saad Eddin Ibrahim (1995) *Egypt Islam and Democracy: Twelve Critical Essays*. American University in Cairo: 104; Nadia Taher (1997b) “Socio-Political and Economic Costs of a Donor-Led Housing Programme: the Case of Rashed-Greater Cairo,” DPU Working Paper No 84 (August): 11; Waterbury (1983): 213.

<sup>34</sup> James B. Mayfield (1996) *Local Government in Egypt*. American University in Cairo Press: 50; see also Harik (1997): 27.



**Map. 2.1: The Cairo Metropolitan Area**

While such top-down distribution hardly meets the needs of the urban populace, it is nonetheless very expensive to provide.<sup>35</sup>

Cairo is also clientelized in the sense that much of its economic activity depends on the spending of the state and its employees who, according to the 1996 census, made up 40 percent of the city's labour force.<sup>36</sup> Especially given state efforts to suppress autonomous formal organization, Cairenes are most likely to seek access to whatever services can be secured top-down—often along patronage lines or through paying bribes—rather than working collectively through associations.<sup>37</sup> A final aspect of this clientelization, discussed subsequently, is the informal networks of urban notability and political control present in many *sha'bi* neighbourhoods.

## 2.2 COPING WITH GROWTH

Shehata's sweeping pronouncements notwithstanding, the Egyptian state's limited infrastructural capacities *vis-à-vis* Cairo, are evident in the failure of post-1952 governments to manage the city's expansion. Cairo experienced substantial population growth in the decades following the Second World War. While the metropolitan area had around 2.5 million inhabitants in 1947, by 1996 the figure had increased close to fivefold.<sup>38</sup> Although the rate of growth decreased considerably between the 1960s and the 1990s, Cairo's population nonetheless continued to increase, per annum, by at least 160,000 through the first half of the latter decade. By themselves, such growth rates are not necessarily a problem.<sup>39</sup> Rather problems begin with the failure to increase the supply of housing and infrastructure proportionately.

Cairo's rapid post-war growth is commonly understood by Egyptian observers, as a consequence of migration from the countryside.<sup>40</sup> Such claims are partially correct for the early 1960s,<sup>41</sup> when exceptionally high growth rates suggest that its expansion was driven by that of the Egyptian state.<sup>42</sup> Yet the overall rate of

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<sup>35</sup> Waterbury (1982): 327; see also Harik (1997): 27.

<sup>36</sup> Sims (2003): 17; Waterbury (1983): 4-5; see also, Hoodfar (1997): 43-4.

<sup>37</sup> Asef Bayat (2002) "Activism and Social Development in the Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 34, 1 (February): 9-11; (1997a): 3-4.

<sup>38</sup> Bayat & Denis (2000): 189 [Table 1].

<sup>39</sup> Concerning debates within the planning literature over city size, see Harry W. Richardson (1989) "The Big, Bad City: Mega-City Myth?," *Third World Planning Review*, 11, 4 (November): 355-72.

<sup>40</sup> Saad Eddin Ibrahim (1995): 98.

<sup>41</sup> André Raymond (2000) *Cairo*. Harvard University Press: 342; Frederic Shorter (1989) "Cairo's Leap Forward: People, Households and Dwelling Space," *Cairo Papers in Social Science*, 12, 1 (Spring): 20 [Table 5].

<sup>42</sup> PADCO et al. (1980) "Working Paper on Characteristics of Alternative Strategies," prepared for Advisory Committee for Reconstruction, Ministry of Development: 9; Habitat [United Nations Centre for Human Settlements] (1993) "Metropolitan Planning and

population increase since the 1950s reflects longer-term economic and demographic trends, including high levels of growth in the prior decades<sup>43</sup> and—because of improved public health—a steady decrease in mortality.<sup>44</sup> Thus the significance of migration is over-stated and high levels of natural increase amongst *existing* Cairenes have generally accounted for 60-90 percent of the city's growth.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, one well-informed observer has gone so far as to argue that by the end of the 1990s, "net in-migration" had almost stopped.<sup>46</sup>

So between 1960 and 1986 the number of Cairene households doubled, "adding more than one million new households" in need of shelter.<sup>47</sup> Affordable housing had long a problem in Cairo,<sup>48</sup> but it was in particularly short supply after the 1940s<sup>49</sup> because of the war-time ban on such construction;<sup>50</sup> shortages of labour and building materials;<sup>51</sup> and the poverty of many Cairenes.<sup>52</sup> Although Cairo-specific quantifications are hard to come by, a variety of official and semi-official studies looking at the period between the mid 1960s and 1980s reported that it had an overall housing deficit of between 300,000 and 1.4 million units.<sup>53</sup> Yet the consequences of the apparent housing shortage have generally not included

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Management in the Developing World: Spatial Centralization Policy in Bombay and Cairo" report No. HS/309/93E: 127.

<sup>43</sup> Janet L. Abu-Lughod (1971) *Cairo: 1001 Years of The City Victorious*. Princeton University Press: 119-126, 129, 153, 175; Shorter (1989): 4-5; Sims (2000): 15.

<sup>44</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 124-30.

<sup>45</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 130; Stephen K. Mayo et al. (1982) "Informal Housing in Cairo," Abt Associates Inc. with Dames and Moore and General Organization for Housing, Building, and Planning Research reported submitted to U.S. Agency for International Development (January): 108-9 [Figure 7-1]; Shorter (1989): 20 [Table 5].

<sup>46</sup> Sims (2003): 3; see also, Bayat & Denis (2000): 190-1.

<sup>47</sup> Belgin Tekçe et al. (1994) *A Place to Live: Families and Child Health in a Cairo Neighborhood*. American University in Cairo Press: 9.

<sup>48</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 125, 163.

<sup>49</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 164-5.

<sup>50</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 164; Amr Mohie - El Din (1982) "Income Distribution & Basic Needs in Urban Egypt," *Cairo Papers in Social Science*, 5, 3 (November): 63.

<sup>51</sup> Betsy Birms McCall (1988a) "The Effects of Rent Control in Egypt—Part I," *Arab Law Quarterly*, 3, 2 (May): 158.

<sup>52</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 166.

<sup>53</sup> For example, see Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture et al. (1985) "Cairo: 1800-2000—Planning for the Capital City in the Context of Egypt's History and Development" in *The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo*. The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Proceedings of Seminar Nine in the Series 'Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World', Cairo, Egypt (November 11-15, 1984): 100; GOPP & Doxiadis Associates International (1977) "Egypt Urban Development Project: Study for Lowest Income Housing," Final Report, vol. 1, World Bank & Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction (December): 51; Abou-Zeid Rageh (1985) "The Changing Pattern of Housing in Cairo" in *The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo*. The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Proceedings of Seminar Nine in the Series 'Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World', Cairo, Egypt (November 11-15, 1984): 135.

homelessness,<sup>54</sup> but rather over-crowding<sup>55</sup>—with population densities said to be some of the highest in the world.<sup>56</sup> Cairenes further sought shelter through various ‘informal’ means including sometimes improvised and unsafe additions to existing units;<sup>57</sup> the somewhat exaggerated phenomenon of tomb- and monument-occupation;<sup>58</sup> and roof-top shacks.<sup>59</sup>

### 2.2.1 STATE POLICIES

Most accounts of the Egyptian state’s shelter interventions purport to delineate the different policies pursued by the Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak governments.<sup>60</sup> This discussion, by contrast, will focus on the continuities among them. All three, for example, shared an authoritarian modernist view of urbanism characterized, conceptually, by the imposition of schematic order, and more materially, by large centrally planned construction projects nominally following western styles and building standards.<sup>61</sup> Although Nasser’s government initially sought to discourage what it perceived to be unproductive housing construction,<sup>62</sup> the ‘social contract’ seems to have included the claim—which persists in Egyptian public discourse—that the state must house those without shelter.<sup>63</sup> That said, its efforts have generally done little for the Cairene *sha‘b*—if only because of financial constraints.<sup>64</sup> These limited efforts, moreover, have tended to favour important constituencies and middle-income groups.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Sawsan el-Messiry (1985) “Comments” in *The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo*. The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Proceedings of Seminar Nine in the Series ‘Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World’, Cairo, Egypt (November 11-15, 1984): 145.

<sup>55</sup> Waterbury (1978): 179-80; Andrea B. Rugh (1979) “Coping with Poverty in a Cairo Community,” *Cairo Papers in Social Science*, 2, 1 (January): 25-6, 29-30.

<sup>56</sup> DIESA [Department of International Economic and Social Affairs] (1990) “Population Growth and Policies in Mega-Cities,” Population Policy Paper No. 34, United Nations: 1.

<sup>57</sup> Raymond (2000): 344-5; see also Shorter (1989): 6.

<sup>58</sup> Sims (2003): 6.

<sup>59</sup> Waterbury (1978): 181-2.

<sup>60</sup> For example, Mohamed El-Mahdy Hamza (1998) “Shelter Policies: the State, Foreign Aid and Economic Reform,” PhD thesis, Oxford Brookes University: 105.

<sup>61</sup> Concerning the nature of schematic order, see Scott (1998): 53-63, 103-46.

<sup>62</sup> Harik (1997): 158, 163; Wahba (1994): 76.

<sup>63</sup> Sims (2000): 28; the continuing hegemony of the idea is suggested in that much reportage on the *‘ashwa’iyyat*—particularly with respect to its clearance—mentions the issue of alternative accommodation.

<sup>64</sup> Waterbury (1978): 184-5.

<sup>65</sup> Rageh (1985): 137.

## A. LAND DEVELOPMENT

Since the 1950s, governments have undertaken only a limited expansion of the metropolitan area. The Nasr city sub-division in northeast Cairo was developed in 1958, in part by the defence ministry,<sup>66</sup> with the aim of creating an “administrative complex” near the major army installations in Heliopolis.<sup>67</sup> While the housing needs of officers, the civilian elite and foreign diplomats were well looked after,<sup>68</sup> it included relatively little low-income shelter.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, neighbourhoods on the west bank of Nile, such as Muhandisin, were established about the same time by means of government-supported housing cooperatives for engineers, police and other professional groups (see Map 5.1).<sup>70</sup>

## B. PUBLIC HOUSING

Nasser’s preference for nominally ‘productive’ investments notwithstanding, both the housing ministry and the governorates have constructed *masakin sha’biyya* (public housing estates) since the early 1960s.<sup>71</sup> Ostensibly “designed to raise the housing standard of Cairo’s low-income families,”<sup>72</sup> some estates on the metropolitan periphery have subsequently served to contain those potentially restive groups—who had rioted in January 1977—in “splendid isolation.”<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless public housing has primarily been a means of rewarding constituents, supporters and clients, with access to flats reportedly controlled by ruling-party politicians.<sup>74</sup>

But *masakin sha’biyya* have never constituted a solution to Cairo’s growth problems. As with other entitlements, they have been highly subsidized,<sup>75</sup> representing a

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<sup>66</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 234.

<sup>67</sup> El Kadi (1990): 191-2.

<sup>68</sup> Denis (1997): 9; Milad M. Hanna (1985) “Real Estate Rights in Urban Egypt: the Changing Sociopolitical Winds” in Ann Elizabeth Mayer ed., *Property, Social Structure and Law in the Modern Middle East*. State University of New York Press: 196.

<sup>69</sup> Raymond (2000): 348, 354.

<sup>70</sup> Hanna (1985): 196-7; Harik (1997): 158-9.

<sup>71</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 231; Rageh (1985): 135-6.

<sup>72</sup> Mahmoud Abdel-Fadil (1980) *The Political Economy of Nasserism: a Study in Employment and Income Distribution Policies in Urban Egypt*. Cambridge University Press: 131.

<sup>73</sup> Interview, Mustapha al-Hefnawi, 6 May 1998.

<sup>74</sup> Nawal Mahmoud Hassan (1985a) “Social Aspects of Urban Housing in Cairo” in Hasan-uddin Khan ed., *Miramar 17: Architecture in Development*. Concept Media: 61; Singerman (1995): 257-8; Nadia Adel Taher (1986) “Social Identity and Class in a Cairo Neighborhood,” *Cairo Papers in Social Science*, 9, 4 (Winter): 80.

<sup>75</sup> Concerning subsidies for renters in the 1970s, see William C. Wheaton (1981) “Housing Policies and Urban ‘Markets’ in Developing Countries: the Egyptian Experience,” *Journal of Urban Economics*, 9, 2 (March): 250.

substantial “windfall gain”<sup>76</sup> and creating “an inexhaustible demand, as much from those who have no housing problems as from those who do.”<sup>77</sup> In part because of inflated public-sector construction costs,<sup>78</sup> the state has never had the resources to meet bottom-up need let alone demand.<sup>79</sup> Despite putatively “massive” building programmes during the Nasser era<sup>80</sup> and increased construction under Mubarak,<sup>81</sup> there were barely 74,000 units of public housing in Cairo in 2000.<sup>82</sup> While public housing shortfalls are commonly blamed on the austerities of the later 1960s and the Sadat government’s subsequent free-market orientation,<sup>83</sup> even during the Nasser era *masakin sha’biyya* never represented more than 5 percent of all housing construction.<sup>84</sup>

Ironically, these much sought-after housing estates suffer from a lack of maintenance, consequent deterioration and hence sub-standard living conditions—a phenomenon associated with informal housing.<sup>85</sup> They become further informalized over time, by virtue of the phenomenon of ‘transformation’—improvised extensions usually made by expanding families to cope with fixed dwelling space<sup>86</sup>—as well as the development of an informal market for nominally rented units.<sup>87</sup>

### C. MARKET-BASED APPROACHES

Sadat’s efforts to encourage private construction in the 1970s did little for the low- and middle-income. Despite government attempts to mandate the construction of “economy” housing,<sup>88</sup> developers have preferred to build for the top 10 percent of the income distribution.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, *infatih* is usually blamed for setting off a boom in

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<sup>76</sup> David Sims (1998) “Telal Zeinhom Participatory Urban Upgrading Project: Project Concept and Pre-Appraisal Report” [Draft], Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau & Cairo Governorate (5 January): 9; Wheaton (1981): 253.

<sup>77</sup> Sims (2000): 30.

<sup>78</sup> Harik (1997): 165, 168.

<sup>79</sup> See Abdel-Fadil (1980): 131; Waterbury (1978): 185.

<sup>80</sup> Saad Eddin Ibrahim (1995): 97.

<sup>81</sup> Sims (1998): 3.

<sup>82</sup> Sims (2000): 37.

<sup>83</sup> For example, Rageh (1985): 137.

<sup>84</sup> Harik (1997): 158.

<sup>85</sup> Hoda A.F. Tolba Sakr (1990) “Underlying Collegial Relationships Controlling Project Implementation: Case Study in Egypt,” PhD dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology: 41.

<sup>86</sup> Ghannam (2002): 46, 161-66; Hala Saad Kardash (1993) “The Transformation of Public Housing Provision in Egypt and the Role of Self Help,” PhD thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne: 73-201.

<sup>87</sup> Sims (2000): 30.

<sup>88</sup> Harik (1997): 160.

<sup>89</sup> Wheaton (1981): 252; see also, Waterbury (1978): 184, 188.



both building and land-speculation, inflating house prices, increasing neighbourhood densities<sup>90</sup> and precipitating yet another kind of housing informality: unauthorized buildings and additions for wealthy consumers.<sup>91</sup>

In the 1980s, the Mubarak government boosted housing construction,<sup>92</sup> through subsidizing the activities of private cooperatives. Again however, such groups are the domain of middle- and upper-income Egyptians—and have been accused of land speculation.<sup>93</sup> Housing finance from the state-controlled banking system has similarly been available only for upper-income groups and large-scale projects.<sup>94</sup>

#### D. RENT CONTROL

While state regulation prior to 1952 had limited the removal of tenants such that leaseholds had effectively become inheritable,<sup>95</sup> the Nasser government promulgated a series of laws and regulations through the early 1960s that froze, reduced or otherwise controlled property rents.<sup>96</sup> Ostensibly a response to the rent inflation brought on by housing shortages,<sup>97</sup> rent control amounts to a *de facto* transfer of ownership rights and is a form of indirect extraction from landlords.<sup>98</sup> It is hence a substantial entitlement for renters-in-place—including upper-income professionals and government officials<sup>99</sup>—whose “real cost of housing” fell during the 1970s.<sup>100</sup> Indeed rent control has had a definite despotic element. It has been described as the equivalent of land reform whereby Nasser and his colleagues could “gain the support of the urban masses, much as they had gained that of the rural masses through land reform in the countryside.”<sup>101</sup> It also provided a means

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<sup>90</sup> Gertel & Kuppinger (1994): 279-80; Hanna (1985): 199-205; Waterbury (1983): 183-6.

<sup>91</sup> Sims (2000): 31.

<sup>92</sup> Harik (1997): 167-8.

<sup>93</sup> Harik (1997): 168; Galila El Kadi (1987/1988) “The Articulation of two Systems of Land Management in Cairo,” *Peuples Méditerranéens*, No. 41-42 (October–March): 173; Mayo et al. (1982): 184; see also, Interview, Mohamed Mohieddin, sociologist & research consultant, Cairo, 2 April 1998.

<sup>94</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 105.

<sup>95</sup> McCall (1988a): 158, 162-3.

<sup>96</sup> For a comprehensive account of the issue, see McCall (1988a); (1988b) “The Effects of Rent Control in Egypt—Part II,” *Arab Law Quarterly*, 3, 3 (August): 274-86; (1988c) “The Effects of Rent Control in Egypt—Part III,” *Arab Law Quarterly*, 3, 4 (November): 345-65.

<sup>97</sup> McCall (1988c): 344.

<sup>98</sup> Harik (1997): 161; McCall (1988b): 275-6.

<sup>99</sup> Manal El-Batran & Ahmed El-Kholei (1996) “Gender and Rehousing in Egypt,” prepared for the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Cairo, the Gender and Development Unit: 44.

<sup>100</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 154.

<sup>101</sup> McCall (1988a): 158; see also, Hanna (1985): 192.

for punishing political enemies whose flats were sequestered<sup>102</sup> and re-allocated by the public sector.<sup>103</sup>

Most importantly, it did not stem rent inflation—but merely displaced it on new entrants to the housing market. Egyptian landlords have systematically sought to circumvent rent control by demanding side-payments—sometimes referred to as “key money.”<sup>104</sup> Despite government efforts to prohibit it,<sup>105</sup> such payments are widespread and represent “a partial equilibrating mechanism” amounting to around 70 percent of the discrepancy between hypothetical market and controlled rents.<sup>106</sup> They also mean that increases in the cost of housing are disproportionately borne by new and migrant households who are likely “*worse* off than they would have been without any rent control.”<sup>107</sup>

## 2.2.2 THE HOUSING SHORTAGE RECONSIDERED

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, some observers began to argue that Cairo was not suffering from a housing shortage. Housing construction had continued through the 1960s at rates actually exceeding population growth,<sup>108</sup> as “state officials, professionals, private sector investors all turned to real estate as the safest investment in a period of rising inflation and growing state control of all sectors of the economy.”<sup>109</sup> One scholar even asserted, some years later, that the very notion of a housing crisis was “exaggerated to satisfy the speculative objectives” of private-sector real estate entrepreneurs.<sup>110</sup>

What was actually happening, is that Egypt had experienced substantial housing-price inflation—around 300 percent—from mid 1960s through the 1970s.<sup>111</sup> On the supply side, it was caused by shortages of building materials, skilled labour—due to migration to the Gulf and Libya<sup>112</sup>—and most importantly the Egyptian

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<sup>102</sup> Harik (1997): 157.

<sup>103</sup> Hanna (1985a): 196.

<sup>104</sup> Singerman (1995): 111-13.

<sup>105</sup> Harik (1997): 163; McCall (1988a): 164.

<sup>106</sup> Stephen Malpezzi & Gwendolyn Ball (1991) “Rent Control in Developing Countries,” World Bank Discussion Papers, No 129: 41 [*para* 4.30].

<sup>107</sup> William C. Wheaton (1979) “Public Policy and the ‘Shortage’ of Housing in Egypt,” Paper prepared for the CU/MIT Technology Adaptation Program (December): 12 [*emphasis in the original*]; World Bank (1986) “Project Performance Audit Report: First Egyptian Urban Development Project” [FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY] Report No. 6561, Operations Evaluation Department: 5.

<sup>108</sup> Wheaton (1979): 1-5.

<sup>109</sup> Waterbury (1983): 185.

<sup>110</sup> El Kadi (1992): 45.

<sup>111</sup> Wheaton (1979): 7-9.

<sup>112</sup> Wheaton (1979): 8-9.

government's land-use controls which precluded new sub-divisions.<sup>113</sup> These controls reflected the official desire to preserve agricultural land in the service of Egypt's food self-sufficiency (2.3.1B) and, more basically, the expense entailed in servicing such new districts.<sup>114</sup> This absence of new development resulted in land-price inflation such that the cost of plots substantially exceeded building costs "in most areas of Cairo."<sup>115</sup>

On the demand side, migrants were fuelling an inflationary flow of resources into real estate and housing with their remittances.<sup>116</sup> Yet rent-control meant that such investment did not necessarily increase housing supplies. Effectively permanent leaseholds strongly discouraged landlords from renting their properties.<sup>117</sup> In Cairo, this amounted to 750,000 empty units—17 percent of all dwellings in the metropolitan area—by 1996.<sup>118</sup> Such "buildings without inhabitants" are not simply an effect of housing speculation,<sup>119</sup> but reflect the desire by property owners—given the impossibility of short-term rentals—to retain units for later use by family members.<sup>120</sup>

## 2.3 THE GROWTH OF INFORMAL CAIRO

The significance of the land-shortage factor is evident in the growth of communities on land not officially sanctioned for urbanization, the form of housing informality of principal concern for this thesis. In 1996, such neighbourhoods represented about 53 percent of the city's residential area and housed 62 percent of its inhabitants.<sup>121</sup> Earlier research has indicated that they accounted for over 80 percent of housing construction from the 1970s through the 1990s.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Arandel & El-Batran (1997): 30; World Bank (1986): 5-6.

<sup>114</sup> Mona Serageldin (1990) "Regularizing the Informal Land Development Process," Contract #DHR-1005-0-00-0019-00, prepared for the Office of Housing and Urban Programs, US Agency for International Development (October): 40; Ahmed M. Soliman (2004a) *A Possible Way Out: Formalizing Housing Informality in Egyptian Cities*. University Press of America: 75.

<sup>115</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): xix; see also, Arandel & El-Batran (1997): 30; Mayo et al. (1982): 162, 185; World Bank (1986): 7.

<sup>116</sup> Wheaton (1979): 10.

<sup>117</sup> Harik (1997): 170-2; McCall (1988b): 276.

<sup>118</sup> Bayat & Denis (2000): 191.

<sup>119</sup> El Kadi (1992): 43.

<sup>120</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 110-111.

<sup>121</sup> Sims (2000): 9, 27.

<sup>122</sup> El Kadi (1994): 31.

### 2.3.1 URBANIZATION OF THE PERIPHERY

The bulk of the sector—including major areas such as ʿAyn Shams and Matariyya in north Cairo; Shubra al-Khayma in Qalyubiyya; and Munira and Bulaq al-Dakrur in Giza—were originally established on the city’s agricultural periphery (see Map 2.2). Most such land is privately owned with homesteaders purchasing it legally; there is little or no ‘squatting’ here.<sup>123</sup> Nonetheless, the subdivision and development of arable land contravene a host of laws, decrees and other regulations prohibiting the conversion of farmland.<sup>124</sup>

Would-be developers have found it practically impossible to get the necessary variances to legalize these sub-divisions<sup>125</sup>—in part because such authorization would obligate the relevant governorate to provide servicing.<sup>126</sup> However, their illegality is largely nominal as there has been little effective state sanction. Although such communities still exist “outside the formal process of land and building registration—and hence outside of official statistics on housing production”<sup>127</sup>—they house over half of all Cairenes.<sup>128</sup>

#### A. SPECIFIC CONDITIONS OF POSSIBILITY

The most basic factor driving the informal urbanization process has been the availability of privately owned land. As shortages of land officially designated for housing began to drive up land prices in the 1960s, “23-fold” by 1993,<sup>129</sup> the price of agricultural land in and around Cairo was stable or falling.<sup>130</sup> Such downward prices were a consequence of both the overall stagnation of the agrarian sector,<sup>131</sup> the environmental impact of nearby urban areas<sup>132</sup> and the fragmentation of holdings.<sup>133</sup> This land was highly attractive for homesteading, not merely because it was available and in small pieces, but also because of its access to water and drainage.<sup>134</sup> It was thus significantly more profitable for owners to sub-divide it and

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<sup>123</sup> For a synoptic account of this type of urbanization, see Sims (2000): 19-21.

<sup>124</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): xv.

<sup>125</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 36, 39-40.

<sup>126</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 61.

<sup>127</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): xv.

<sup>128</sup> Sims (2000): 10, 14.

<sup>129</sup> El-Batran & Arandel (1998): 220.

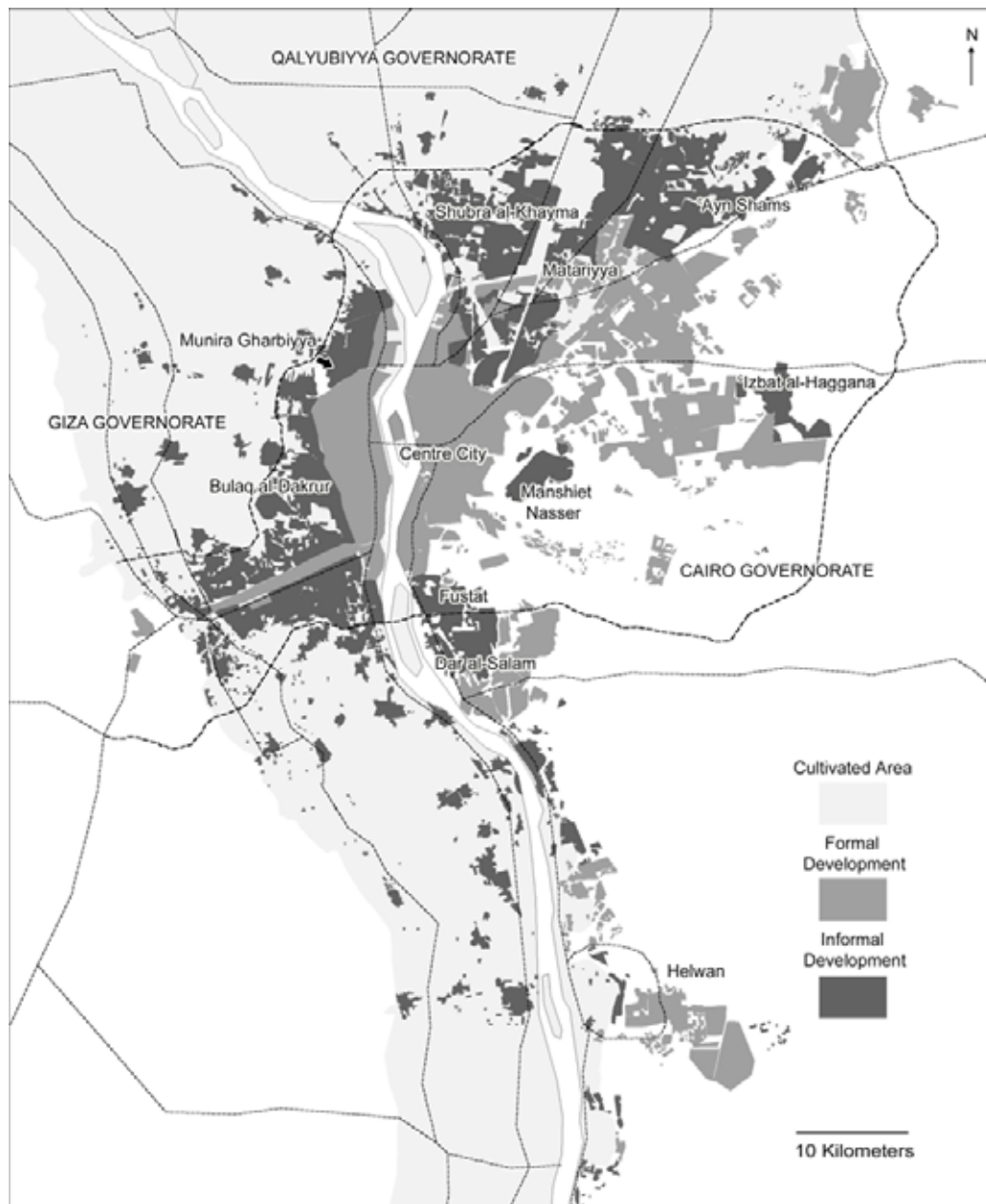
<sup>130</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 38.

<sup>131</sup> Dames & Moore (1981) “Final Report: Cairo Metropolitan Area Land Use/Infrastructure Development Study,” USAID Contract No. AID/OTR-1-1853, Work Orders 1 and 2 (September): 2-13; Mayo et al. (1982): 38.

<sup>132</sup> Oldham et al. (1987): 53, 92.

<sup>133</sup> Soliman (2004a): 100-1.

<sup>134</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 65; Sims (2000): 19.



**Map 2.2:** Informal development in the Cairo Metropolitan Area  
*Source:* Séjourne (2000a/b)

sell it to would-be homesteaders rather than continue to farm it. Hence the urbanization process took place by means of an entrepreneurial land and building market.<sup>135</sup> Although its actual dynamics are rather complicated—including speculative tendencies, informal land-development companies and accusations of land misappropriation<sup>136</sup>—most accounts emphasize the roles of peasants turned estate agents and “owner-builders” seeking shelter for their families.<sup>137</sup>

Although the informal-housing sector predates the remittance boom of the 1970s,<sup>138</sup> the availability of capital from Egyptians employed outside the country accelerated its development from the mid 1970s through the mid 1980s.<sup>139</sup> As with property development more generally, informal housing became “a prime form of investment,” protected from inflation.<sup>140</sup> Perhaps as much as 70 percent of the \$73 billion remitted by Egyptians through 1998<sup>141</sup> has been invested in land and housing.<sup>142</sup>

## B. PROCESS & CONSEQUENCES

Informal urbanization can thus be understood as an organic movement of people with sufficient capital to build, buy or rent in search of affordable neighbourhoods. Such areas have been settled by new entrants to the housing market who bore the full brunt of sectoral inflation and market distortions. They included not just low-income immigrants from the country-side,<sup>143</sup> but also Cairene newly weds<sup>144</sup> for

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<sup>135</sup> Harik (1997): 173.

<sup>136</sup> Arandel & El-Batran (1997): 16; Harik (1997): 173; Galila El Kadi (1988) “Market Mechanisms and Spontaneous Urbanization in Egypt: the Cairo Case,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 12, 1 (March): 27-9, 31, 31-2; Mayo et al. (1982): 36-7; Khalid Mustafa Medani (2000) “Informal Markets and Islamist Activism in the Neighborhood of Imbaba, Cairo,” paper given on the New Forms of Collective Action in the Context of Globalization: the Case of Egypt panel, Middle East Studies Association annual meeting, Orlando, Florida (November); Sims (2000): 20.

<sup>137</sup> Harik (1997): 173; Sims (2000): 20.

<sup>138</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 32 [Table 4-2]; Sims (2003): 12.

<sup>139</sup> Sims (2003): 12; Florian Steinberg (1990) “Cairo: Informal Land Development and the Challenge of the Future” in Paul Baróss and Jan van der Linden eds., *The Transformation of Land Supply Systems in Third World Cities*. Gower Publishing Company: 113-15.

<sup>140</sup> Serageldin (1990): 42.

<sup>141</sup> Calculated from Richard H. Adams (2001a) “Oil, Migration, Remittances and Development in the Middle East,” Lecture Tables prepared for Seminar Series on Oil and Politics in the Contemporary Middle East, Middle East Centre, St. Antony’s College, Oxford University (2 March): 2 [Table 2].

<sup>142</sup> Unfortunately, data is only available for migrants from rural areas, see Richard H. Adams (1991) “The Economic Uses and Impact of International Remittances in Rural Egypt,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 39, 4 (July): 715.

<sup>143</sup> Sims (1990): 4.

<sup>144</sup> Bayat & Denis (2000): 192.

whom housing represents about a third of their marriage costs.<sup>145</sup> Such intra-city population movement—*not* migration from the countryside—has been its driving force.<sup>146</sup>

Between the mid 1960s and the late 1980s, the process consumed hundreds of hectares of arable land every year,<sup>147</sup> urbanizing the countryside around Cairo.<sup>148</sup> Nationally, it has been projected to decrease Egypt's stock of arable land 10-20 percent by 2000, a potentially worrying development given the country's dependence on imported food.<sup>149</sup> That some 98 percent of Egypt's population has historically lived on the less than 4 percent of its surface (about 2.5 million hectares) which is cultivatable,<sup>150</sup> suggests an inverse relationship between population growth/urbanization and agricultural production.<sup>151</sup> Hence the Egyptian officials responsible for Cairo in the 1980s perceived its informal expansion as a threat to Egypt's food security and declared that the protection of arable land was their government's principle objective.<sup>152</sup>

That said, there is actually little data with which to correlate changes in agrarian productivity or output with urbanization levels. Indeed, setting aside the issues of reclaimed-lands productivity and the apparent lack of official consensus as to the size of the arable area,<sup>153</sup> the amount of farmland seems to have increased through the 1990s.<sup>154</sup> Rather the most important factor affecting agrarian productivity and output has been state intervention—and the gradual lessening thereof in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Diane Singerman & Barbara Ibrahim (2001) "The Cost of Marriage in Egypt: A Hidden Dimension in the New Arab Demography" in Nicholas Hopkins ed., *The New Arab Family, Cairo Papers in Social Science*, 24, 1/2 (Spring/Summer): 102.

<sup>146</sup> Shorter (1989): 21-2; see also, Mayo et al. (1982): 108-10.

<sup>147</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1982c) "Greater Cairo Region—Master Scheme" [DRAFT] Ministry of Development, State Ministry for Housing and Land Reclamation: 1-24 [Table 1.3.4]; see also, Dames & Moore (1981): 2-14.

<sup>148</sup> For a case study of the process, see Oldham et al. (1987).

<sup>149</sup> For apparently official projections, see Agnès Deboulet (1994) "Vers Un Urbanisme D'Émanation Populaire: Compétences et réalisations des citoyens – L'exemple du Caire" [Towards a Town Planning From Below: Citizens' Abilities and Achievements – the Example of Cairo] PhD thesis, Institut d'urbanisme de Paris, Université Paris XII – Créteil (24 January): 63; Mayo et al. (1982): 34.

<sup>150</sup> Khalid Ikram (1980) *Egypt: Economic Management in a Period of Transition*. Johns Hopkins University Press: 3; Sadowski (1991): 24 [end note 40].

<sup>151</sup> For an outline of the urbanization vs. food security dichotomy in the 1980s, see Sadowski (1991): 15-26.

<sup>152</sup> Dames & Moore (1981): 2-15; Mayo et al. (1982): 189.

<sup>153</sup> Sadowski (1991): 24-5, 91.

<sup>154</sup> François Ireton (1998) "The Evolution of Agrarian Structures in Egypt: Regional Patterns of Change in Farm Size" in Nicholas S. Hopkins & Kirsten Westergaard eds., *Directions of Change in Rural Egypt*. American University in Cairo Press: 43-7; see also, *Middle East Economic Digest* (1988) "Egypt: the missing farmland," 32, 51 (23 December): 23.

<sup>155</sup> Adams (2003): 33-5; Sadowski (1991): 40.

Without the benefit of permission and planning, informal urbanization resulted in sprawling neighbourhoods—sometimes represented as a “belt” surrounding Cairo.<sup>156</sup> Their densities of up to 2,000 people per hectare<sup>157</sup> may be some of the highest in the world.<sup>158</sup> Little land is reserved for roads or other amenities, and such communities are sometimes characterized by narrow sunless canyon-like streets without intersections.<sup>159</sup>

### 2.3.2 OTHER KINDS OF URBAN INFORMALITY

These urban-fringe neighbourhoods are also significant politically: they include the areas in which Islamist militants have tended to base themselves. Yet the informal urbanization of arable land hardly begins to exhaust the ways in which housing informality in Cairo has been manifest. Two other types of informal urbanization have played an important role in shaping Cairo’s socio-political space.

#### A. ENCROACHMENTS ON STATE LAND

A number of communities in the Cairo governorate—including Manshiet Nasser located on the slopes of the Muqattam plateau to the east of the city’s medieval core and ‘Izbat al-Haggana on its eastern edge—squat on desert or mountainous land (see Map 2.2).<sup>160</sup> Unlike farmland, it is automatically considered to be state property, and hence land ownership is more problematic than in agrarian-periphery settlements.<sup>161</sup>

Consequently, such areas have somewhat different antecedents, generally in a pre-existing settlement or “toe-hold” area which no public-sector agency considered worth defending from bottom-up encroachment.<sup>162</sup> Homesteaders first test official tolerance and then begin to make and defend land claims.<sup>163</sup> If successful, and depending on continued state indifference, residents then expand out of the area.

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<sup>156</sup> El Kadi (1992): 4.

<sup>157</sup> IAURIF/GOPP (1994) “Giza: A Comprehensive Urban Planning Policy,” State Ministry of New Communities (February): 52, 54; Sims (2000): 41 [Table 21].

<sup>158</sup> Compare with DIESA (1990): 1.

<sup>159</sup> Mohamed el-Sioufi (1982) “4. El-Mounira Informal Settlement, Cairo” in Margaret Bently Sevckenko ed., *Urban Housing*. Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture: 26.

<sup>160</sup> Concerning ‘Izbat al-Haggana, see David Sims (1984) “Reconnaissance Survey: Ezbet al.-Haggana,” Unpublished typescript (8 September); Soliman (2004a): 95-197; concerning Manshiet Nasser, see Tekçe et al. (1994): 20-61.

<sup>161</sup> This is according to both the civil code and specific legislation; see Mostafa Morsi El Araby (2003) “The role of the state in managing urban land supply and prices in Egypt,” *Habitat International*, 27, 3 (September): 434.

<sup>162</sup> Sims (2000): 21-2.

<sup>163</sup> Sawsan El-Messiri (1985) “The Squatters’ Perspective of Housing: an Egyptian View” in Willem van Vliet et al. eds., *Housing Needs and Policy Approaches: Trends in Thirteen Countries*. Duke University Press: 261; for a case study, see: 263-4.



They “stake out claims on substantial parcels [...] and then [...] further subdivide these into building plots to newcomers. In every case informal exchange/transaction markets [are] quickly established.”<sup>164</sup> These land markets may resemble those found in agrarian periphery settlements and there is the similar phenomenon of the owner-builder.<sup>165</sup>

Somewhat melodramatically described as “the only alternative offered to those excluded from all the housing markets,” encroachment neighbourhoods attract low-income homesteaders priced out of urban-periphery neighbourhoods.<sup>166</sup> Also, such areas have often been settled by the employees of nearby factories, “trading risk against location.”<sup>167</sup> While building standards in established areas may be similar to those in urban-periphery settlements, housing conditions are generally worse.<sup>168</sup> Encroachment communities face greater insecurity and more pressing problems of services, particularly with respect to water. Indeed, their expansion out of the original toe-holds is perhaps possible only if they can piggy-back on to the services available nearby in either formal dwellings or construction on arable land.<sup>169</sup>

While the most established areas may, again, have densities similar to those in urban-periphery settlements,<sup>170</sup> tenure insecurity and servicing deficits have meant that they are a smaller-scale phenomenon, representing no more than 12 percent of informal Cairo by area and 9 percent by population.<sup>171</sup> For these same reasons, as well as their often closer proximity to formal areas, they have nonetheless received a disproportionate degree of attention in donor upgrading efforts.

## B. SQUATTER POCKETS

The other type of informal housing taken up here comes closest to conventional stereotypes about ‘shanty towns’. It is somewhat of a catch-all category including the core areas of rural villages which have been absorbed into central Giza and whose land tenure status may be ambiguous; old state-provided ‘emergency’ housing which has been expanded by subsequent settlement; as well as shacks and other extremely sub-standard dwellings in long-settled neighbourhoods. Such areas

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<sup>164</sup> Sims (2000): 22; see also Arandel & El-Batran (1997): 16-17.

<sup>165</sup> For example, see Tekçe et al. (1994): 25-6, 29-33.

<sup>166</sup> El Kadi (1992): 43.

<sup>167</sup> Oldham et al. (1987): 89.

<sup>168</sup> Sims (2003): 6.

<sup>169</sup> GOPP/IAURIF (1986a) “Greater Cairo Region- Long Range Urban Development Scheme: East Cairo Urban Development Plan (Master Plans),” Ministry of Development, New Communities and Land Reclamation: 1-5.

<sup>170</sup> For example with respect to ‘Izbat Bakhit, see Sims (2003): 17; with respect to ‘Izbat al-Haggana, see Soliman (2004a): 31.

<sup>171</sup> Sims (2000): 9 [Table 4], 27 [Table 10].

have “attracted very poor families seeking the cheapest possible housing solutions”<sup>172</sup> and one veteran observer notes that “the worst housing conditions are to be found in these types of settlements.”<sup>173</sup> Demographically, however, they are insignificant with a total population of perhaps no more than 150,000 by the late 1990s.<sup>174</sup> Nonetheless, they have tended to appear on demolition lists and figure significantly in some of the arguments to be made in subsequent sections.<sup>175</sup>

## 2.4 PATHOLOGY VERSUS AGENCY

Despite its considerable heterogeneity, informal Cairo is often seen by domestic observers, in blanket terms, as a zone of socio-spatial disorder. Western analysts have also discussed such neighbourhoods with equally sweeping—albeit more positive—generalizations, as “self-help” communities exemplifying popular agency.<sup>176</sup> Neither position, however, fully acknowledges the actual integration of informal areas into the larger city and the broader patterns of Egyptian state-society relations.

### 2.4.1 PATHOLOGICAL URBANISM

The pejorative view of many Egyptian journalists, academics and government officials towards informal urbanization is manifest in the widespread use of the label *‘ashwa’iyyat*.<sup>177</sup> Although one semi-official analysis from the mid 1990s noted that the term lacked “a comprehensive and prescriptive definition,”<sup>178</sup> its three main aspects neatly sum up the apparent challenge posed by informal urbanization to the ethos of modernist urbanism. The first element, and probably still the core, is that such communities lack formal planning, they are “building without architects” (*‘imara bi-la mu‘amarin*).<sup>179</sup> Second, such unregulated urbanism is treated as unambiguously illegal. Despite the relative infrequency of this type of settlement, informal areas are routinely depicted as encroachments on state property.<sup>180</sup> Illegality and the absence of planning, in turn, account for the third main

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<sup>172</sup> Sims (2003): 7; see also Sims (1998): 7.

<sup>173</sup> Sims (1998): 2.

<sup>174</sup> Sims (1998): 3; see also, Sims (2003): 7.

<sup>175</sup> Sims (2003): 7.

<sup>176</sup> Tekçe et al. (1994): 17.

<sup>177</sup> In the mid 1990s, 20-30 percent of all social-issues reportage in the Egyptian press concerned “housing and the *‘ashwa’iyyat*”; see al-Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies (1997) *Arab Strategic Report 1996* (in Arabic). Al-Ahram: 274 [Table 2]; (1996): 373 [Table 1].

<sup>178</sup> Al-Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies (1996): 451.

<sup>179</sup> Al-Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies (1996): 451.

<sup>180</sup> Al-Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies (1996): 451.

characteristic of the *‘ashwa’iyyat*—its lack of infrastructure: “because the areas are established in violation of the law, so the responsible agencies refuse to assist them with services like drinking water or sanitary drainage.”<sup>181</sup>

But *‘ashwa’iyyat* are not merely unplanned, in breach of the law and lacking basic infrastructure. Rather the social pathology discourse suggests that, by virtue of these characteristics, they threaten Egypt’s moral, social and political health.

#### A. SOCIO-SPATIAL DISORDER

To begin with, the *‘ashwa’iyyat* literature entails a crude, and essentially circular, linkage between spatial and social disorder. Reportage is replete with references to physical squalor: wooden shacks, narrow streets, mountains of garbage, disease and over-crowding.<sup>182</sup> Such a “deformed architectural infrastructure” reflects “the urban anarchy [which] has wrought havoc in our cities.”<sup>183</sup> Alternatively, the causal relationship is reversed with the crowded conditions in such areas said to induce “feelings of frustration and aggression” amongst their inhabitants.<sup>184</sup>

The socio-spatial linkage is further evident in representations of the *‘ashwa’iyyat* as “cancerous.”<sup>185</sup> In other words, such putatively uncontrolled urbanism is a threat to the city and nation as a whole. These areas are sometimes depicted as a threat to modernity and development: “a continual source of disturbance and anxiety [...] an axe that will destroy progress.”<sup>186</sup> A common variation on this theme is that the *‘ashwa’iyyat*—as the refuge of migrants from the countryside—contribute to Cairo’s “ruralization.”<sup>187</sup>

#### B. URBAN OUTCASTS

This last point suggests a second broad theme: that the term *‘ashwa’iyyat* is as much a description of the people living in informal areas as the areas themselves.<sup>188</sup> The

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<sup>181</sup> Al-Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies (1996): 451.

<sup>182</sup> For example, see *al-Ahram al-Misa’i* (1992) “Izbat al-Qurud: waiting for the death sentence!” [in Arabic] (10 May); more generally, see Singerman (1999): 14-17.

<sup>183</sup> Al-Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies (1996): 452.

<sup>184</sup> Al-Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies (1996): 453.

<sup>185</sup> Petra Kuppinger (2001) “Cracks in the Cityscape: Traditional Spatial Practices and the Official Discourse on ‘Informality’ and *irhab* (Islamic Terrorism)” in Armando Salvatore ed., *Muslim Traditions and Modern Techniques of Power*. Lit [Verlag]: 200-02; Singerman (1999): 16-17.

<sup>186</sup> Rif’at ‘Arif al-Daba’ (1994) “The Return of the Shaykh al-Hara: Why and How?” (in Arabic) *al-Ahram* (11 August); Mahmud Nafi’ (1992) “’96 ‘Ezba Occupy the Capital” (in Arabic) *al-Jumhuriyya* (14 May); see also Kuppinger (2001): 201.

<sup>187</sup> Institute of National Planning (1996) “Egypt Human Development Report 1996,” Human Development Project in technical cooperation with United Nations Development Programme: 56; see also, Singerman (1999): 20-4.

<sup>188</sup> My thanks to Mohamed Qadri for pointing this out to me.

social-pathology discourse—particularly given its stress on the theme of migration from the countryside—is a way of talking about them as “outsiders,” living in “unmodern” and “abnormal” conditions.<sup>189</sup>

Not only do their harsh conditions allegedly disorder their inhabitants, the *‘ashwa’iyyat* are also the sanctuary for intrinsically disorderly groups. Informal neighbourhoods are routinely characterized as “nests of criminals, beggars, drug dealers and those who flee the law”<sup>190</sup> and who seek to corrupt their neighbours.<sup>191</sup> Another marginalizing device is the stress placed on the putative poverty of their inhabitants—described, for example, as “a shabby proletariat”—who have no alternative but to live in illegal, unplanned and un-serviced areas.<sup>192</sup> A third category of marginals are migrants from the Sa‘id (Upper Egypt) whose supposed insularity and tribalism make them a hostile and un-modern element.<sup>193</sup> Ironically given the claim of *sa‘idi* insularity, informal areas are also said to be wanting in cohesion and community for “lack of homogeneity among the population.”<sup>194</sup>

### C. “PERVERSION, PARASITISM AND TERRORISM”<sup>195</sup>

Yet such areas are not merely disordered and marginal. The *‘ashwa’iyyat* are further said to be “centres for the incubation of crime and extremism” threatening the larger community.<sup>196</sup> The third set of themes found in the discourse thus draws upon the previous two, seeking linkages to the success of the Islamist implantation in Munira Gharbiyya and elsewhere.

One putative explanation is that of deprivation. Denied gainful employment, decent living conditions and basic services, the dwellers of the *‘ashwa’iyyat* are embittered and hostile to the larger society.<sup>197</sup> Overwhelmed by Cairo’s affluence, the residents of Munira became “undisciplined dissident groups” and hence could

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<sup>189</sup> Bayat & Denis (2000): 197.

<sup>190</sup> Al-Daba<sup>c</sup> (1994).

<sup>191</sup> Mamduh al-Wali (1994) *Sukkan al-‘ashash wa-l-‘ashwa’iyyat: al-kharita al-iskaniyya li-l-muhafazat* (Population of the Shacks and the *‘Ashwa’iyyat*: a Housing Map for the Governorates). Engineers Syndicate: 5; see also Singerman (1999): 13.

<sup>192</sup> Mubarak (1995): 240; see also, Aida el-Badran (1995) “*Ashwa’i* Housing in Egypt: Solutions and Proposed Alternatives to Solve the Problem of the Security of the *‘Ashwa’iyyat*” (in Arabic), Paper presented at the Annual Seminar on Population Issues in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, Cairo Demography Centre (12-14 December): 3.

<sup>193</sup> Catherine Miller (2006) “Upper Egyptian Regionally Based Communities in Cairo: Traditional or Modern Forms of Urbanization?” in Diane Singerman & Paul Amar eds., *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Middle East*. American University in Cairo Press: 377-9.

<sup>194</sup> El-Badran (1994): 4.

<sup>195</sup> El-Badran (1994): 10.

<sup>196</sup> Al-Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies (1996): 453.

<sup>197</sup> Ahram Strategic Centre (1996): 453-4; Mubarak (1995): 239-40; Singerman 1999: 31-2.

easily be co-opted by the Islamists.<sup>198</sup> Other accounts see the breakdown of social order in the *‘ashwa’iyyat* as enabling militant penetration. Munira Gharbiyya, for example, had allegedly become a “Hobbesian world of violence and vice”<sup>199</sup> facilitating the Gama‘a Islamiyya’s efforts to create a counter-society.<sup>200</sup> Its “social work committees” provided welfare services; its “night watch” secured the streets; and its “reconciliation committee” mediated disputes.<sup>201</sup> The Gama‘a Islamiyya’s imposition of social control—identical to its tactics in Upper Egypt—was also said to have found favour with the predominantly Sa‘idi inhabitants of Munira whose “ideas, customs and traditions” were much the same as those of their brethren in the south.<sup>202</sup>

## 2.4.2 ‘MYTHS OF MARGINALITY’

The claims of the *‘ashwa’iyyat* literature obviously cannot be taken at face value. To begin with, the literature perpetuates the historic fears of the Cairene elite that their city is over-run with disorderly peasants.<sup>203</sup> Moreover it reproduces a Latin-American social-pathology discourse from the 1950s and 1960s—the subject of Janice Perlman’s well-known “myth of marginality” critique—in which informal communities are seen as the exclusive domain of the socially excluded.<sup>204</sup> Such notions of marginality further include a conception of social menace in which such urban poor “spurred by frustration and resentment [...] will turn to aggressive, radical, or violent political behavior.”<sup>205</sup> Yet informal neighbourhoods represent over half of Cairo, however calculated, and can hardly be called marginal.<sup>206</sup> Quite the contrary, reports from a variety of western observers—and some Egyptian sources—suggest their *de facto* integration with the larger community on a variety of levels.

### A. SPATIAL ORDER

‘Architecture without architects’ is hardly as sub-standard and squalid as suggested in the *‘ashwa’iyyat* discourse. Particularly with respect to urban-periphery communities—which consist largely of multi-story concrete and brick

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<sup>198</sup> Ahram Strategic Centre (1996): 453; Mubarak (1995): 240.

<sup>199</sup> Saad Eddin Ibrahim (1995): 75.

<sup>200</sup> Saad Eddin Ibrahim (1995): 87-8.

<sup>201</sup> Mubarak (1995): 246, 260-3.

<sup>202</sup> Mubarak (1995): 243.

<sup>203</sup> Miller (2006): 376; see also Kuppinger (1995): 71-8.

<sup>204</sup> Janice E. Perlman (1976) *The Myth of Marginality: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro*. University of California Press: esp. 1-17, 242-62.

<sup>205</sup> Joan M. Nelson (1979) *Access to Power: Politics and the Urban Poor in Developing Countries*. Princeton University Press: 126.

<sup>206</sup> Bayat & Denis (2000): 197.

buildings when consolidated—observers have noted that construction standards are similar, if not superior, to those in formal neighbourhoods.<sup>207</sup> These houses are often built by their owners, and “Egyptians when they build for themselves, build well.”<sup>208</sup>

Informal housing is, in fact, a highly flexible and adaptable form appropriate to the circumstances of its inhabitants.<sup>209</sup> Moreover it is hardly random. Such communities have a definite logic of spatial organization<sup>210</sup> entailing, in some cases, “practices of space creation” negotiated out by competing interests and resulting in a “common definition of the urban pattern” while preserving space for the later installation of infrastructure.<sup>211</sup> Such neighbourhoods also tend to be spatially integrated with the rest of the city—“naturally weaved into the fabric of the urban region”<sup>212</sup>—and connected to it by means of an extensive network of *service* minibuses.<sup>213</sup>

## B. STANDARDS OF LIVING

Contrary to discourses of social pathology, some expatriate observers have commented on the orderliness and relatively high standard of life in informal settlements with one going so far as to claim that “the most interesting unanswered question about informal settlements is why many of them are such nice places to live.”<sup>214</sup> Social cohesion can depend largely on non-formal patronage-based groups, solidarities and networks.<sup>215</sup> Yet such areas—Manshiet Nasser is sometimes cited—may be *highly* cohesive,<sup>216</sup> in part as the result of a shared vulnerability to removal and conscious efforts to create “local governance and conflict resolution”

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<sup>207</sup> Mohamed A. El-Husseiny (1987) “Genesis and Legacy: A Study of Traditional Contemporary and Proposed Systems of Control Over Residential Developments in Cairo,” MSc thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology: 30-8.

<sup>208</sup> Taher (1997a): 6.

<sup>209</sup> Florian Steinberg (1991) “Architecture and Townscape in Today’s Cairo: the Relevance of Tradition,” *Ekistics*, Nos. 346/347 (January/February & March/April): 144.

<sup>210</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 42-5.

<sup>211</sup> Agnes Deboulet (1995) “Upgrading Squatter Settlements: A First Insight in the Urban Norms and Forms of Rationality Among City Dwellers Involved in the Creation of Popular Neighborhoods,” in *Improving the Living Environment for the Urban Poor: Towards Sustainable Development, Preparatory Meeting to Habitat II, Organized by the Society for Upgrading the Built Environment (SUBE) and United Nations Center for Human Settlements (Habitat)*, Cairo (18-21 December): 64-6.

<sup>212</sup> Mohamed Samy Saad Zaghoul (1994) “The Structure and Dynamics of Informal Urban Growth: the Cairo Urban Region, 1976-1986,” PhD thesis, Harvard University: 58.

<sup>213</sup> Bayat & Denis (2000): 193.

<sup>214</sup> Oldham et al. (1987): xx.

<sup>215</sup> Deboulet (1995): 63-4; Oldham et al. (1987): 58, 86; Soliman (2004a): 104-5.

<sup>216</sup> Interview, Linda Oldham, urban development consultant, Cairo, 11 April 1997; Tekçe et al. (1994): 11-12, 26-7; concerning the Cairo governorate neighbourhood of Dar al-Salam, see Steinberg (1991): 78-9.

systems.<sup>217</sup> These self-help efforts explain why it has been described as “comfortable to live in despite the lack of infrastructure and social services.”<sup>218</sup>

Yet consultancy reports looking at urban-periphery neighbourhoods in Giza suggest that other informal areas are less well organized.<sup>219</sup> In some instances, their inhabitants fail to create self-help institutions and they suffer from a breakdown in social control “because nobody knows anybody else’s father or grandfather.”<sup>220</sup> In relatively new communities where cohesion and self-help institutions are weak, other observers report, Islamists may be able to establish themselves as a force for solidarity and service provision.<sup>221</sup> Yet at least one such neighbourhood includes *masakin sha<sup>c</sup>biyya*. Hence the problem of social solidarity is not confined to informal areas, but is also manifest in those built by the state.

Indeed, the top-down dispensation of power may be part of the problem.<sup>222</sup> Coercion, administrative controls and clientelist legacies more generally, probably help explain the absence of urban social movements and relatively limited role of urban NGOs.<sup>223</sup> While religious and mosque-based groups may have a greater opportunities for community action<sup>224</sup>—perhaps facilitating Islamist penetration in some instances—yet even these may undertake only limited activities.<sup>225</sup> Hence as elsewhere in Cairo, the *sha<sup>c</sup>b* have little choice but to rely on informal networks and ties of kinship and friendship. State efforts to preclude bottom-up collective action hence encourage the kind of solidarities that are sometimes derided as primitive and rural.<sup>226</sup>

### C. MIGRATION & POVERTY

While possessing a long pedigree, fears that Cairo is being invaded and transformed by primitive peasants lack empirical basis (see 2.2). If anything, the

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<sup>217</sup> Tekçe et al. (1994): 26-7; see also Sims (1984): 3; Tekçe et al. (1994): 56.

<sup>218</sup> Oldham et al. (1987): 87.

<sup>219</sup> EQI [Environmental Quality International] (1995) “Boulak al-Dakrur: Participatory Upgrading Project,” Unpublished consultancy paper: 3; GTZ [Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit] (1995) “Participatory Urban Upgrading: Boulaq Dakrour (Governorate of Giza),” Draft Project Design Report, Project Appraisal Mission Report for GTZ (December): 14; Oldham (1987): 10-15, 58-60; Unni Wikan (1995) “Sustainable Development in the Mega-City: Can the Concept Be Made Applicable?,” *Current Anthropology*, 36, 4 (August-October): 643-4.

<sup>220</sup> Oldham et al. (1987): 98.

<sup>221</sup> Ghannam (2002): 118-26; Mubarak (1995): 244; Wickham (2002): 123.

<sup>222</sup> Bayat (2002): 9-10; Singerman (1995): 30.

<sup>223</sup> Bayat (1997a): 3-5; see also Louise G. White (1986) “Urban community organizations and local government: exploring relationships and roles,” *Public Administration and Development*, 6, 3: 250-1.

<sup>224</sup> Bayat (2002): 12.

<sup>225</sup> Bayat (2002): 13-14; Deboulet (1995): 62-3.

<sup>226</sup> Bayat (2002): 9-11.

two main trends in its recent development are the “stabilization of rural-urban migration” and the urbanization of the countryside.<sup>227</sup> Informal areas are also more socio-economically integrated than suggested in the *‘ashwa’iyyat* literature.<sup>228</sup> Whereas it places particular emphasis on the lack of productive employment available in such areas, they may contain numerous informal workshops;<sup>229</sup> Manshiet Nasser has also housed much of Cairo’s aluminium industry.<sup>230</sup> With respect to socio-economic status more generally, the informal housing sector is best understood as an intermediate category.<sup>231</sup> Its residents are perhaps less affluent and educated than those in established formal neighbourhoods, particularly those of the elite—but not extremely so.<sup>232</sup> Ironically, Cairo’s most deprived communities tend to be in the more historic ‘core’ neighbourhoods.<sup>233</sup>

As even some Egyptian observers acknowledge,<sup>234</sup> there is income heterogeneity within the informal housing sector<sup>235</sup>—some communities are more middle-income than others<sup>236</sup>—as well as within particular neighbourhoods.<sup>237</sup> Crucially, they evolve over time.<sup>238</sup> While neighbourhoods are likely to be small-scale and seemingly impoverished at the outset, they expand and develop as they become more secure and land prices increase.<sup>239</sup> Perhaps as a consequence of having gained some access to services,<sup>240</sup> they may later begin to suffer from high population densities and over-crowding,<sup>241</sup> as well as accessibility problems.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Bayat & Denis (2000): 187.

<sup>228</sup> For example, see Petra Kuppinger (1997) “Giza Spaces,” *Middle East Report*, No. 202 (Winter): 14-16.

<sup>229</sup> Oldham et al. (1987): 22, 61; Sims (1990): 17; Tekçe et al. (1994): 28-9.

<sup>230</sup> Tekçe et al. (1994): 57-61.

<sup>231</sup> Galila El Kadi (1985) “The Social Division of Space in Cairo: Segregation and Contradictions” (in French) *Monde arabe Maghreb Machrek*, No. 110 (Octobre-Novembre): 39-47; see also Raymond (2000): 361-4.

<sup>232</sup> Sims (1990): 15-16; for a study arguing for socio-economic improvements in informal areas, see Harris & Wahba (2002): 73-4.

<sup>233</sup> Harris & Wahba (2002): 76-7; El Kadi (1985): 45-6.

<sup>234</sup> For example, Samir Sulayman (1997) “From the Islamic Republic to the Control of the Ruling National Party” (in Arabic) *al-Yasar*, No. 87 (May): 26.

<sup>235</sup> David Sims (2002) “What is secure tenure in urban Egypt” in Geoffrey Payne ed., *Land, Rights & Innovation: Improving Tenure Security for the Urban Poor*. ITDG Publishing: 81; Zaghoul (1994): 137-8.

<sup>236</sup> Zaghoul (1994): 45.

<sup>237</sup> Bayat & Denis (2000): 198; Sims (2003): 4.

<sup>238</sup> Oldham et al. (1987): 82.

<sup>239</sup> Sims (2002): 94; Zaghoul (1994): 127-8.

<sup>240</sup> El-Batran & Arandel (1998): 222.

<sup>241</sup> IAURIF/GOPP (1994): 54; Sims (2003): 6.

<sup>242</sup> Sims (1990): 17.



#### D. OTHERING THE ISLAMISTS

As a discourse of stigmatization, the *‘ashwa’iyyat* literature has a number of functions only indirectly related to the areas it purports to describe. To begin with, it can be understood as an attempt to depoliticize the Islamist political challenge—with its elements of subaltern agency and protest of the *status quo*—as mere criminality, a product of informal Cairo’s socio-spatial disorder.<sup>243</sup> As Singerman notes, it contributes to the political goal—intrinsic to the post-1952 order—of “denying communities the legal right and space and organizational resources to participate in Egyptian political life.”<sup>244</sup> More specifically, Petra Kuppinger has argued that the *‘ashwa’iyyat* discourse provided the Mubarak government with a means of deflecting the increased public concern with Cairo’s overall well-being that followed the earthquake and clashes with militants. In her view, the *‘ashwa’iyyat* discourse served to “spatialize a series of social and political problems,” in effect transferring them “into these [informal] areas, symbolically absolving the rest of the city.”<sup>245</sup>

#### 2.4.3 SUBALTERN AGENCY?

By contrast, since the 1970s western observers have tended to reject claims that informal urbanization is pathological. Indeed, they have been inclined to valorize such communities—and *sha’bi* Cairo more generally—as exemplifying the quotidian efforts of the economically and politically excluded, to sustain and better themselves.<sup>246</sup> Falling broadly within the subaltern-studies tradition, the study of informality sees these efforts as constituting an “autonomous domain,” neither originating from societal elites nor dependent on them.<sup>247</sup> For example, informal settlements have sometimes been described as “self-help” communities,<sup>248</sup> as part of an ensemble of “survival strategies” used by individuals to “promote their interests.”<sup>249</sup> They offer poor and subaltern groups a better standard of housing and services—and perhaps more opportunities for income generation—than would be otherwise available.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Singerman (1999): 26-7.

<sup>244</sup> Singerman (1999): 27.

<sup>245</sup> Kuppinger (2001): 197, 199.

<sup>246</sup> In a Cairo context, see Bayat (1997a); (1997b): 53-72; Singerman (1995): 132-72; Tekçe et al. (1994): 10-12, 17, 41.

<sup>247</sup> Ranajit Guha (2000) in Vinayak Chaturvedi ed., *Mapping Subaltern Studies: and the Postcolonial*. Verso: 3.

<sup>248</sup> Tekçe et al. (1994): 17.

<sup>249</sup> Hoodfar (1997): 16 [fn 20].

<sup>250</sup> Tekçe et al. 1994: 11, 57-61.

## A. ENCROACHMENT & AUTONOMY?

Despite the absence of social movements and relative weakness of NGOs in informal communities, their very size and level of development indicates that their inhabitants are hardly passive. As noted in the previous chapter, Bayat has argued that poor and subaltern groups resist subordination by surreptitious means. In his view, the various forms of informal homesteading; the unauthorized connections of such communities to utility networks; and informal street markets all constitute “the ‘quiet encroachment of the ordinary’—a silent, patient, protracted, and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful.”<sup>251</sup> Moreover, he has insisted that this notion of encroachment transcends mere ‘resistance’ insofar as “the struggles of the urban poor are also surreptitiously *offensive*, that is, disenfranchised groups place a great deal of restraint upon the privileges of dominant groups.”<sup>252</sup>

In this context, the *‘ashwa’iyyat* discourse might be understood as reflecting elite fears of such popular agency.<sup>253</sup> Yet Bayat is at pains to argue that quotidian practices of encroachment are neither explicitly political nor even necessarily conscious at the outset. Nonetheless he maintains that the poor will take to the streets against the authorities—relying on “passive networks” to facilitate collective action<sup>254</sup>—in defence of their heretofore surreptitious gains.<sup>255</sup> This combination of incremental encroachment and what he calls “street politics” is usually sufficient to fend off state sanctions.<sup>256</sup>

Such notions of encroachment, autonomy and street politics fit within the broader position, originally outlined by Singerman, that the Cairene *sha‘b* should be studied with respect to their agency in creating “collective informal institutions that serve their interests.”<sup>257</sup> Singerman further speculates that these institutions represent a potential source of autonomous organizational power, on the basis of which the *sha‘b* might eventually secure a greater degree of formal political inclusion.<sup>258</sup> Further still, Salwa Ismail has argued that informal areas constitute “spheres of dissidence” in which Islamist militants are able to establish themselves by virtue of the areas’ “autonomy, informality and self-regulation.”<sup>259</sup> She sees the militants as

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<sup>251</sup> Bayat (1997b): 57.

<sup>252</sup> Bayat (1997b): 56 [*emphasis in the original*].

<sup>253</sup> Ghannam (2001): 46.

<sup>254</sup> Bayat (1997b): 63-6

<sup>255</sup> Bayat (1997b): 58, 62-3.

<sup>256</sup> Bayat (1997b): 63-6.

<sup>257</sup> Singerman (1995): 13.

<sup>258</sup> Singerman (1995): 243, 268, 272.

<sup>259</sup> Ismail (2000): 364, 389.

exploiting the illegality and invisibility “inscribed in the characteristics of the space itself,”<sup>260</sup> for example, the absence of police stations.<sup>261</sup>

## B. DISCONNECTED FROM THE STATE?

Claims that informal Cairo represents an autonomous social space suggest, to varying degrees, that the Egyptian state is not entirely in control of informal areas and even that they may “[challenge] the state’s sense of its authority.”<sup>262</sup> These claims also find ironic resonance in the *‘ashwa’iyyat* discourse itself which sometimes cites state neglect as a factor in their emergence.<sup>263</sup> Probably with respect to Manshiet Nasser, Singerman notes that the absence of formal civil organizations, ironically, complicates state control over such areas.<sup>264</sup> Other researchers, also looking at Manshiet Nasser, have observed an informal court and dispute resolution system to which the police deferred.<sup>265</sup>

Such views are also found in interpretations of the Islamist insurgency in Munira Gharbiyya. One author writes of the Gama’<sup>a</sup> Islamiyya as exploiting “the political, social and security vacuum,” caused by the government’s failure both to assert its presence and develop the area.<sup>266</sup> Reportage while the siege was underway, stressed the need for the state to assert its presence and to deny the Islamists refuge.<sup>267</sup> Even some years later, a leftist writer asserted that the area still remained self-sufficient and detached, hence continuing to defy state authority on an everyday level.<sup>268</sup>

### 2.4.4 EXAGGERATING AUTONOMY

Analytically, claims of subaltern agency and state disconnect bear more than a little resemblance to those of the *‘ashwa’iyyat* discourse. Indeed, Ismail’s ‘spheres of dissidence’ claim almost reproduces the argument—critiqued by Singerman as depoliticizing—that the Islamist presence can be explained as a product of environmental factors.

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<sup>260</sup> Salwa Ismail (1996) “The Politics of Informal Space in Cairo,” *Arab Studies Journal*, 4, 2 (Fall): 125.

<sup>261</sup> Ismail (1996): 127-8.

<sup>262</sup> Singerman (1999): 37-8.

<sup>263</sup> Al-Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies (1996): 452.

<sup>264</sup> Singerman (1995): 313 [note 23].

<sup>265</sup> Interview, Linda Oldham, 11 April 1997; see also Tekçe et al. (1994): 27.

<sup>266</sup> Mubarak (1995): 245; see also Interview, Hisham Mubarak, Director, Center for Human Rights Legal Aid, 8 June 1996.

<sup>267</sup> For example, ‘Atif al-Ghamri (1992) “Imbaba, the law and other things” (in Arabic) *al-Ahram* (16 December): 9 Salah Muntasar (1992) “One of the reasons for terrorism” (in Arabic) *al-Ahram* (16 December): 9.

<sup>268</sup> Sulayman (1997): 26.

## A. PROBLEMATICS OF AUTONOMY

While the Egyptian state's relationship to the informal housing sector will be taken up shortly, here it is worth injecting an initial note of scepticism, on several grounds, as to whether such communities can be plausibly defined as 'autonomous'. Most are connected to the larger metropolitan area; integration likely increases as they mature.<sup>269</sup> Given Cairo's compactness—the metropolitan area is only 295 km<sup>2</sup> according to one calculation<sup>270</sup> and most Giza informal settlements are within a 10 km radius of the city centre<sup>271</sup>—very few such communities are physically far removed from state institutions. Especially after the clashes with the Islamists, the Egyptian state has made efforts to extend its reach, at least at the despotic level, by constructing police stations and widening roads to facilitate its access to informal neighbourhoods.<sup>272</sup>

## B. INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICING

The issue of servicing further connects the informal housing sector both to the larger city and to the state which is, if not as the only provider, then the primary gate-keeper of infrastructure. Far from being spatially autonomous, many informal settlements 'piggy-back' onto the infrastructure grids of existing formal developments.<sup>273</sup> Some are aligned to transportation networks<sup>274</sup> and others are essentially infill between formal developments.<sup>275</sup> In short, the informal development of agricultural and desert areas has usually been a long-term consequence of earlier public-sector development or infrastructure provision in them.<sup>276</sup>

That said, few informal neighbourhoods are adequately serviced at their inception, causing most of the environmental problems they face. Hence once established, their residents seek infrastructure as much as socio-political autonomy.<sup>277</sup> Besides its self-evident benefits, servicing is seen as a means of protecting against removal

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<sup>269</sup> For example, see Tekçe et al. (1994): 53.

<sup>270</sup> Sims (2000): 2.

<sup>271</sup> GOPP/IAURIF (1990) "Protection of Arable Land and Rural Areas Development: The Case of the Homogenous Sector No 14 (North-West Giza) – General Features and Main Interests," Ministry of Development, New Communities, Housing and Public Utilities (February): [back of p. 4].

<sup>272</sup> El-Batran & Arandel (1998): 230; with respect to Munira Gharbiyya, see al-Sawi (1996): 110; Sulayman (1995): 26.

<sup>273</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 61, 67.

<sup>274</sup> Zaghoul (1994): 61-3.

<sup>275</sup> GOPP/IAURIF (1986b) "Greater Cairo Region- Long Range Urban Development Scheme: Guide Plan - Implementation of the Homogenous Sectors," Ministry of Development, New Communities and Land Reclamation: 2-3-7 & 2-3-8.

<sup>276</sup> For example, Hassan (1996): 141; Zaghoul (1994): 61.

<sup>277</sup> For example, see Deboulet (1994): 518-24; Tekçe et al. (1994): 53.

and hence securing *de facto* tenure.<sup>278</sup> Electricity and water connections are generally the easiest to obtain. Research done in the early 1990s in encroachment communities on the Fustat plateau in the south Cairo indicates—the claims of social-pathology discourse notwithstanding—that they are available from state utility providers on commercial terms.<sup>279</sup> At a minimum, state agencies have been willing to install public stand-pipes,<sup>280</sup> a process facilitated by the establishment of mosques which have priority in receiving piped water and electricity.<sup>281</sup> Of course, both electricity and water service can also be pirated.<sup>282</sup>

By contrast, sewerage is probably the most difficult to supply,<sup>283</sup> and has been a constraint on the provision of housing and water service in Cairo.<sup>284</sup> Prior to the start of donor-funded servicing in the 1980s (see 6.2.3B), connection levels in low-income and informal areas may have been in the 18-20 percent range, with the majority of Cairenes using septic tanks.<sup>285</sup> Even studies which reported higher connection levels nonetheless indicated that large informal communities such as Dar al-Salam in south Cairo and Shubra al-Khayma had little or no access.<sup>286</sup> Septic tanks, however, are often not used properly and become less suitable as settlements densify. Hence informal areas tend to suffer from ground-water contamination, problematic in the absence of piped water, and other health hazards associated with poor sanitary drainage.<sup>287</sup>

Finally, this brief discussion has addressed only the most basic forms of infrastructure. Other services such as solid-waste removal, transportation networks and schools are also likely to be insufficient in a community's early phases, but will not be dealt with here for reasons of space.<sup>288</sup>

### C. INFORMAL INTEGRATION

State control over informal areas may also be exercised informally. Some observers have argued “that even communities which are completely disconnected from state

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<sup>278</sup> Deboulet (1994): 518-19.

<sup>279</sup> Deboulet (1994): 498-9.

<sup>280</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 67.

<sup>281</sup> Mohamed-Ayman Abdel-Majeed Mohamed Sayed Daef (1994) “Residential Displacement in the Rental Sector: the Effects of Upgrading on the Squatter Settlement of Arab Rashed—Egypt 1981-1991,” PhD thesis, University of London: 256; Mayo et al. (1982): 67.

<sup>282</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 49; Daef (1994): 264; Sims (1998): 10.

<sup>283</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 74-5.

<sup>284</sup> Nadim et al. (1980): 117, 122.

<sup>285</sup> Nadim et al. (1980): 98 [Table 32]; see also, Mohie - El Din (1982): 53.

<sup>286</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 74.

<sup>287</sup> Nadim et al. (1980): 30-1, 102-6; Oldham et al. (1987): xv, 8-10, 33-4, 71-4, 97.

<sup>288</sup> But see Mayo et al. (1982): 71-4, 76-7, 79-84; Steinberg (1990): 125.

services and police control, are connected to the state via personal networks<sup>289</sup> and that local notables represent “the continuation of the state by other means.”<sup>290</sup> Such notables provide a measure of political control and security on behalf of the state<sup>291</sup> and act as intermediaries, on behalf of the *sha‘b*, *vis-à-vis* the bureaucracy and the security forces.<sup>292</sup> They also provide a measure of patronage distribution<sup>293</sup> and may mediate or even seek to pre-empt community disputes.<sup>294</sup> Hence notables have been described “as an urban second stratum, providing for the local social base of state and elites power.”<sup>295</sup>

Some informal areas also seem to be incorporated into the political order by means of the patronage politics—described in detail by May[e] Kassem—through which ruling-party politicians seek electoral support ahead of Maglis al-Sha‘b and local government elections.<sup>296</sup> Uncharitably characterized by one Egyptian observer as part of an “unholy alliance formed between bureaucrats and politicians [...] to exploit the marginal sectors,”<sup>297</sup> the latter distribute goods such as potable water prior to voting and promise protection from demolition as well as the provision of services<sup>298</sup> and even re-housing—promises which are not always kept.<sup>299</sup> In other cases, local notables from informal neighbourhoods are co-opted into the ruling party or otherwise cultivate ties with its politicians at the local and national levels.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Cilja Harders (1998) “Studying Micro-level Politics in Poor Neighbourhoods in Cairo,” paper presented at the American University in Cairo research seminar (18 March): 7.

<sup>290</sup> Patrick Haenni, researcher, Centre d’Etudes et de Documentation Economique, Juridique et Sociale (CEDEJ), comments made an informal symposium held at the CEDEJ, 22 March 1998.

<sup>291</sup> Louis J. Cantori & Peter Benedict (1984) “Local Leadership in Urban Egypt: Leader, Family and Community Perceptions” in Louis J. Cantori & Iliya Harik eds., *Local Politics and Development in the Middle East*. Westview: 55-6; Hinnebusch (1985): 33, 248.

<sup>292</sup> Deboulet (1994): 540-1; Harders (1998): 12-13; Ismail (2001): 7.

<sup>293</sup> Deboulet (1994): 541-2; Harders (1998): 9-12; Oldham et al. (1987): 14, 58, 86; Singerman (1995): 244-60.

<sup>294</sup> Cantori & Benedict (1984): 55-6; Singerman (1995): 257-8; on the other hand, see Oldham et al. (1987): 14-15.

<sup>295</sup> Harders (1998): 16; see also, Ghannam (2001): 42, 45; Hinnebusch (1985): 248.

<sup>296</sup> For example, Kassem (1999): 79-82.

<sup>297</sup> Ninette Fahmy (2004) “A Culture of Poverty or the Poverty of Culture? Informal Settlements and the Debate over the State-Society Relationship in Egypt,” *Middle East Journal*, 58, 4 (Autumn): 601.

<sup>298</sup> Daef (1994): 256.

<sup>299</sup> Deboulet (1994): 540-3; Fahmy (2004): 606-7, 608-10; Sulayman (1995): 26.

<sup>300</sup> Harders (1998): 13; for examples, see Daef (1994): 250-6; Deboulet (1994): 454; Oldham et al. (1987): 14, 58, 86; UNICEF [United Nations Children’s Fund] (1996) “Urban Community Development: the Case of Cairo and Alexandria, Report prepared for the Regional Conference on Area-based Community Development, Egypt Country Office: 17.

## 2.5 THE CYCLICAL INDIFFERENCE OF THE STATE

Illegal settlements [tend] to be regarded as places of marginality and social disorder, where the intervention of public authorities could stir up severe social unrest and intervention is therefore to be avoided.<sup>301</sup>

This critique of the popular-agency approach suggests that the key issue mediating informal Cairo's relationship to the state is not the exteriority of the former, but the latter's limited infrastructural capacity. The housing ministry, for example, has been described as a "nightmare for ministers" subject to repeated reorganization and failing to implement projects.<sup>302</sup> If anything, this claim is a considerable oversimplification: in the period covered by the thesis, the urban-development sector spanned at least three ministerial portfolios—reconstruction, largely of the Suez Canal zone; the new desert cities; and housing and major infrastructure projects—which were combined, separated and recombined in various cabinet re-shuffles between 1974 and 1986.<sup>303</sup>

The state planning agency, the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP), while nominally responsible for guiding Cairo's growth is—like its predecessor the Greater Cairo Planning Commission (GCPC)—little more than a "technical consulting outfit."<sup>304</sup> According to a French researcher who worked with the organization in the 1990s, it has generally not had a major role in the state response to informal Cairo.<sup>305</sup> While subsequent chapters will suggest that the real authority for upgrading informal communities has been located in the governorates, these have only limited administrative capacity.<sup>306</sup> Although sometimes treated as distinct entity from national government,<sup>307</sup> they have little revenue of their own<sup>308</sup> and their budgets are mostly consumed by the salaries of their numerous yet

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<sup>301</sup> Alain Durrand-Lasserve (1996) "Regularization and Integration of Irregular Settlements: Lessons from Experience," UMP Working Paper Series No. 6, Urban Management Programme, UNDP/UNCHS (Habitat)/World Bank (March): 8.

<sup>302</sup> Moore (1994): 180.

<sup>303</sup> Because of the inadequacy of existing accounts—for example see Hamza (1998): 138 [Figure 7.4]—the thesis will draw upon a chronology compiled from the *Middle East Journal's* quarterly chronologies of events in the region.

<sup>304</sup> Waterbury (1978): 137; this point was confirmed in interviews with French consultants seconded to the agency as part of French assistance to the Greater Cairo Region Master Scheme; for example, Interview, Marcel Belliot, IAURIF Project Manager (June 1989-July 1993), Greater Cairo Region, Long Range Urban Development Master Scheme, 26 March 2001.

<sup>305</sup> Interview, Eric Denis, Urban and Social Geographer, CEDEJ, 3/4 June 1997.

<sup>306</sup> Mona Serageldin (1985) "Planning and Institutional Mechanisms" in *The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo*. The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Proceedings of Seminar Nine in the Series 'Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World', Cairo, Egypt (November 11-15, 1984): 122.

<sup>307</sup> For contrasting views, see Sakr (1990): xv; Sullivan (1983): 9-10.

<sup>308</sup> Serageldin (1985): 125.

unproductive employees.<sup>309</sup> Local government is also complicated by the so-called “dual executive system” in which individual service or regulatory units are also affiliated to a parent national ministry, complicating lines of command.<sup>310</sup>

The dual executive system is symptomatic of a broader administrative pathology characteristic of the Egyptian bureaucracy: the fragmentation of responsibility. While top-down control is centralized to the extent that real decisions with respect to urban management are made only by a few senior officials,<sup>311</sup> specific responsibility for any particular issue area may be extremely decentralized or otherwise difficult to identify.<sup>312</sup> At various points, informal Cairo has been dealt with by the governorates, the housing ministry and its specialized agencies and centres, the local-government ministry and the prime minister’s office among others.

These constraints on state capacity are obliquely evident in policy-making through the middle of the 1990s, which appeared to follow a pattern whereby apparent ignorance of informal urbanization abruptly ended after the earthquake and the clashes in Munira Gharbiyya.<sup>313</sup> The public exposure of such areas was followed by denunciations which, however, were tempered by the eventual recognition that upgrading was the only solution to their putative pathologies. Yet resource constraints limited the extent to which upgrading was possible, suggesting that state officials would eventually revert to a position of indifference.

Indeed, there is evidence that state officials have been well aware of informal Cairo for some decades, and that the pattern of ignorance, denunciation and acceptance of upgrading is cyclical. Informal areas are hardly as illegal as they are portrayed in the *‘ashwa’iyyat* discourse which—along with the appearance of state engagement—may actually mask more constant relationships of tacit acceptance, neglect and clientelism.

### 2.5.1 TAKEN BY SURPRISE?

One analyst has compared President Mubarak’s various pronouncements on *‘ashwa’iyyat* during the 1992-93 period, noting an increasing degree of concern

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<sup>309</sup> Khaled Salah Elkhishin (1990) “Planning for Growth in the Cairo Region: A Strategic Management Approach Modelled on the Paris Experience,” PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania: 173.

<sup>310</sup> Mayfield (1996): 129; Sims (2003): 4.

<sup>311</sup> Ghannam (2001): 41-2.

<sup>312</sup> Ghannam (2001): 39; for example, see *Cairo Times* (1997) “Down the drain - again,” 1:11 (24 July - 6 August): 4; CDC [Community Design Collaborative] et al. (1997) “Al-Darb Al-Ahmar: An Agenda for Revitalisation: Conservation and Development Proposals for a Historic District in Cairo,” Final Report, UNDP Assisted Project for the Supreme Council of Antiquities, Ministry of Culture (August): 41-2.

<sup>313</sup> For a discussion of the pattern, see Zaghoul (1994): 6-7.



culminating in a pledge to make “tackling the heart of the *‘ashwa’iyya* areas” a principal task of his government.<sup>314</sup> Such concern is implicitly portrayed as a consequence of increased official and public cognizance of informal Cairo.<sup>315</sup> That such areas had been previously unnoticed—and perhaps even hidden—is a regular trope of the *‘ashwa’iyyat* discourse, whether in the opposition or the semi-official press, and seemingly implicit in most discussions of the issue.<sup>316</sup> In some accounts, their ‘invisibility’ is closely linked to issues of servicing with one Egyptian observer noting that “the local authorities were usually taken by surprise when they were asked to supply these areas with amenities, as if they had developed overnight.”<sup>317</sup>

Consultants working in Cairo in the 1970s and 1980s reported a mix of both pretend and genuine ignorance on the part of journalists and government officials,<sup>318</sup> as well as ministerial pronouncements that such areas did not exist.<sup>319</sup> As late as 1994, the introduction to a Franco-Egyptian planning study described Giza’s informal neighbourhoods as an “almost forgotten part of the town,” going on to comment that “this area is almost unknown: no maps or guide plans.”<sup>320</sup>

#### A. HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT?

While the term *‘ashwa’iyya* was not widely used until after the 1992 earthquake and not linked with Islamists until after the Siege of Imbaba, the issue was linguistic.<sup>321</sup> Prior to the 1990s, discussions of informal communities—while embodying fears and themes that would subsequently appear in the *‘ashwa’iyyat* discourse—described them as “shacks” or “encroachments on state land.”<sup>322</sup> Insofar as it was used prior to the 1990s, *‘ashwa’iyya* seems to have had fewer pejorative

<sup>314</sup> Al-Sawi (1996): 81.

<sup>315</sup> Singerman (1999): 5, 7.

<sup>316</sup> For example, see Muhammad Basha (1993) “Imbaba.. the Place and the People: Between Terrorism and Justice” (in Arabic) *al-Ahram* (4 January): 9; ‘Abd al-‘Azim al-Basil (1992) “Terrorism.. on the list” (in Arabic) *al-Ahram* (16 December 1992): 3; Bayat (2002): 21; Tahani Ibrahim (1995); Sulayman (1997): 26; see also, Tekçe et al. (1994): 33.

<sup>317</sup> Hanna (1985): 198.

<sup>318</sup> Interviews, Alain Bertaud, Architect Planner on the preparatory missions for the World Bank’s Egypt First Urban Development Project, Washington, DC, 4 December 2000; Linda Oldham, 11 April 1997.

<sup>319</sup> El-Messiri (1985): 256; Interview, Kevin Tayler, EMS & GTZ urban development consultant, 17 November 1999.

<sup>320</sup> IAURIF/GOPP (1994): 5; see also al-Wali (1994): 248.

<sup>321</sup> Kuppinger (2001): 197-202 Interview, Hisham Mubarak, (8 June 1996). This periodization is supported by a 1991 story about Islamist-linked disturbances in Munira Gharbiyya that—while referring to the area’s dilapidation—does not use the term *‘ashwa’iyya*; see ‘Abd al-Mun‘im al-Jidawi (1991) “What is Happening in Imbaba?” (in Arabic) *al-Musawwar* (27 September): 22. It is reinforced by a multi-volume compilation of press clipping about the *‘ashwa’iyyat* prepared by the Cairo-based media information centre, Markaz al-Mahrusa which do not predate 1991.

<sup>322</sup> For examples, see *al-Tali‘a* (1969) “The Road to the Cairo of the Future” (in Arabic) 5, 2 (February): 76-101; Karam Jabr (1982) “Official Report: The Government Destroys Agricultural Land” (in Arabic) *Ruz al-Yusuf*, (29 March): 26-8.

connotations, referring simply to urbanization without formal planning rather than objectifying disorder.<sup>323</sup>

Indeed, a variety of sources suggests that state officials have been well aware of extra-legal housing for some decades. In 1956, for example, the legislature passed the first law regularizing houses built illegally on agricultural land, meaning that they could not be demolished. A second such regularization law was passed in 1966.<sup>324</sup> Press reportage and commentary from the 1960s make reference to the community which would later become Manshiet Nasser and the area of ʿIzbat al-Qurud in the north-Cairo district of Zaytun—neighbourhoods subsequently labelled *ʿashwaʿiyya*—calling them “shacks.”<sup>325</sup> That Cairo’s growth was perceived as a problem even then, is suggested in claims that the Nasser government considered closing the city to immigration in 1967.<sup>326</sup> While abandoned at the time as impractical, closure is one of the regularly proposed measures—discussed in the next sub-section—to curb the informal sector.

The visibility of informal Cairo was further evident throughout the 1970s. For example, there were regular discussions in the press, starting around 1971 and especially after 1973, about how the agricultural areas which historically supplied Cairo with fresh produce were disappearing.<sup>327</sup> In 1971, an effort was made to clear informal areas, one of which would be subsequently designated as *ʿashwaʿiyya* and again slated for removal in the 1990s.<sup>328</sup> In 1972, the Cairo governor established a commission to consider how to stop migration to Cairo suggesting continuing official unease with its bottom-up growth.<sup>329</sup>

Moreover, starting around 1976 and continuing through the 1980s, a series of western consultancy teams arrived to advise the Egyptian government and its international donors on how to deal with the pathologies of Cairo’s growth. In cooperation with various state agencies, they produced a series of reports—most of which mention informal Cairo, in some cases extensively.<sup>330</sup> These reports also

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<sup>323</sup> Interview, Hisham Mubarak, 8 June 1996; the point is also suggested by the titles of papers given at the first annual conference of the Egyptian Society of Engineers held in January 1986. Many have the phrase “*namw ʿashwaʿi*” (random growth) in their titles, referring to the process of development.

<sup>324</sup> Joint Land Policy Team (1977b) “Urban Land Use in Egypt: Appendix,” Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction, Ministry of Planning with Office of Housing, Agency for International Development (August): 110-11.

<sup>325</sup> *Al-Ahram* (1966) “Destruction of the largest nest for drugs in ʿIzbat al-Safih and fast improvement measures for the district” (in Arabic) No. 29,106 (19 August); *al-Taliʿa* (1969): 79.

<sup>326</sup> *Al-Taliʿa* (1969): 82.

<sup>327</sup> Interview, Mohamed Mohieddin, 2 April 1998.

<sup>328</sup> Waterbury (1978): 183.

<sup>329</sup> Waterbury (1978): 128.

<sup>330</sup> The most notable of these was Mayo et al. (1982).

indicate an awareness of the issue within the state bureaucracy.<sup>331</sup> For example, the housing ministry estimated in the mid 1970s that “50 percent of subdivisions and 60 percent of building activity are in violation of existing legislation.”<sup>332</sup> Its 1979 housing plan was explicitly formulated in the context of countering the consumption of arable land by urbanization.<sup>333</sup> Such awareness was not limited to those working with expatriate consultants. Beginning in 1978, the Egyptian academic and politician Milad Hanna produced a series of books calling attention to Egypt’s housing problems—using a language of social pathology which prefigured the *‘ashwa’iyyat* discourse.<sup>334</sup>

One veteran Cairo consultant believed that the issue first became visible through a series of press reports in the middle of the 1980s.<sup>335</sup> In the latter half of the decade, both the prime minister and the local-government minister commented on the phenomenon, the former asserting that it was “cancerous”<sup>336</sup> and the latter noting that the Mubarak government could do little about it.<sup>337</sup> At a more everyday level, routine state awareness of the informal sector’s existence is indicated by the fact that such neighbourhoods have long had official committees charged with implementing rent-control legislation.<sup>338</sup> Informal population growth in north Cairo, Manshiet Nasser and Giza was acknowledged in changes to the census and districting system in the 1980s.<sup>339</sup> As the December 1982 announcement of the Giza re-districting noted, the inclusion of Munira in a new Imbaba district followed: “the new urban and residential broadening which stretches to the city cordon.”<sup>340</sup> Hence it is problematic to describe informal areas such as Munira Gharbiyya as having “grown like grass and multiplied without planning and persisted in their growth

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<sup>331</sup> Sakr (1990): 5, 79.

<sup>332</sup> Joint Housing Team (1976) “Immediate Action Proposals for Housing in Egypt,” Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction, Ministry of Planning with Office of Housing, Agency for International Development (June): 62.

<sup>333</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 34.

<sup>334</sup> Milad Hanna (1996) *al-Iskan wa-l-siyasa* (Housing and Politics). General Book Organization: esp. 113-32; (1987) *al-Iskan wa-l-misyada: al-mushkila wa-l-hall* (Housing and the Trap: the Problem and the Solution). Mustaqbal ‘Arabi Publishing House: esp.58-62; (1978) *Urid maskanan: mushkila li-ha hall* (I Want a Place to Live: a Problem Having a Solution). Ruz al-Yusuf Publishing House: esp. 61-2; see also, Majlis al-Sha‘b (1985) “Studies and Working Papers Concerning the Issue of Housing in Egypt” (in Arabic) Housing and Public Utilities and Reconstruction Committee: 30.

<sup>335</sup> Interview, Linda Oldham, 11 April 1997.

<sup>336</sup> Ahmed M. Soliman (1995) “A Tale of Informal Housing in Egypt” in Brian C. Aldrich and Ranvinder S. Sandhu eds., *Housing the Urban Poor: Policy & Practice in Developing Countries*. Zed Books: 311.

<sup>337</sup> Harik (1997): 174.

<sup>338</sup> McCall (1988b): 277; Tekçe et al. (1994): 32-3.

<sup>339</sup> Concerning the Cairo governorate, see Singerman (1995): 277 [note 40].

<sup>340</sup> *Al-Ahram* (1982a) “A Fourth District in Giza Includes Imbaba, Munira and the Estates” (in Arabic) No. 35,052 (1 December): 8.

without supervision” as was done exactly ten years later during the Islamist clashes.<sup>341</sup>

## B. THE LOGIC OF INDIFFERENCE

While state officials have sometimes been at pains to deny that state concern with informal Cairo began after 1992, nonetheless claims that the *‘ashwa’iyyat* had been somehow hidden are crucial for the logic of the discourse.<sup>342</sup> Otherwise, assertions of their extreme pathology implicitly raise the question of why the state had allowed them to reach such a state. Any suggestion of acquiescence to the phenomenon, by contrast, diminishes its imminent menace.

Yet more perceptive observers have made exactly this argument: that governments have ignored informal Cairo.<sup>343</sup> Through the 1960s and mid 1970s, for example, the Nasser and Sadat governments were preoccupied with public-sector development and the confrontation with Israel. The sub-division of agricultural land simply fell below the threshold.<sup>344</sup> By the late 1970s, however, the size and rapid expansion of such areas had become too large to ignore.<sup>345</sup> But nonetheless in certain circumstances, Egyptian officials still sought to “downplay” the phenomenon: “contending that most of this informal housing [was] just that—mostly temporary, mud brick structures.”<sup>346</sup> Apart from donor backed initiatives, state agencies made few attempts to deal with housing informality:

There was little official commitment to tackling the issue, since it began to dawn on decision-makers just how vast informal areas had become. For urban planners and the State alike, it was an unwelcome reality which hopefully could be wished away. And wish away they did through the launching of the new towns policy in 1977.<sup>347</sup>

Thus informal Cairo was *not* somehow ‘discovered’ after the earthquake and clashes with the Islamists—and then recognized thereafter. Even after 1992, western consultants assigned to Egyptian state agencies concerned with informal areas noted the apparent disinclination of their Egyptian colleagues to collect data

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<sup>341</sup> Montasar (1992): 9.

<sup>342</sup> With respect to the issue of state concern, note the comments of a Giza governorate official quoted in Kuppinger (2001): 202.

<sup>343</sup> Nezar Alsayyad (1993) “Squatting, Culture, and Development: A Comparative Analysis of Informal Settlements in Latin America and the Middle East,” *Journal of Developing Societies*, IX, 2 (July-October): 147; Harders (1998): 16; Ismail (2000): 374; Tekçe et al. (1994): 41.

<sup>344</sup> Sims (2003): 11-12.

<sup>345</sup> Sims (2003): 12-13.

<sup>346</sup> Wheaton (1979): 3.

<sup>347</sup> Sims (2003): 13.

or even visit the areas in question.<sup>348</sup> One possible interpretation of this socially produced invisibility is that it stems from the tension between the inability of Egyptian governments to accept the informal sector's challenge to their monopoly on formal urban development and their equal inability to remove it: "the Government position was that 'squatter' settlements are illegal. While they could not eradicate them because it was politically impossible to do so, they chose to ignore them."<sup>349</sup> Another possible interpretation relates, inevitably, to the issue of servicing. Although some informal homesteaders have sought to avoid drawing attention,<sup>350</sup> others are 'discovered' as they press their demands for infrastructure.<sup>351</sup> State 'ignorance' of their existence may thus be a thinly veiled metaphor for its neglect of them.<sup>352</sup>

## 2.5.2 PROHIBITING THE INFORMAL

Official reaction to the discovery of such areas is often reflexive: they are illegal, squalid and must be removed forthwith.<sup>353</sup> Such talk is suggestive of what analysts of Cairo's informal markets have described as a "spatial war" between elite and subaltern.<sup>354</sup> The former seek "a renewed sense of security and control of their immediate spatial environment" by sanctioning disorderly urbanism and enforcing a degree of spatial segregation.<sup>355</sup> These analysts have further suggested that such a strategy informs the Mubarak government's post-1992 efforts to deal with the *'ashwa'iyyat*.<sup>356</sup> Such claims, however, are likely exaggerated. This sub-section will outline the inability of successive governments to contain informal Cairo.

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<sup>348</sup> For example, see IAURIF/GOPP (1994): 46, 48; a Dutch-funded consultant managing a training programme at a housing-ministry research centre recounted an incident where Egyptian officials refused to visit deteriorated and informal areas as part of the training.

<sup>349</sup> EQI (1986) "Squatter Areas in Cairo," unpublished consultancy paper quoted in Taher (1997a): 10.

<sup>350</sup> Tekçe et al. (1994): 26-7; see also Alsayyad (1993): 149.

<sup>351</sup> Jennifer Bell (forthcoming) "Land Disputes, the Informal City, and Environmental Discourse in Cairo," in Paul Amar & Diane Singerman eds., *Cairo Hegemonic: State, Justice, and Urban Social Control in the New Middle East*. American University in Cairo Press.

<sup>352</sup> For example, Khalid Salah (1995) "In Imbaba: Hikr 'Abd al-Radi.. a collective detention camp" (in Arabic) *al-'Arabi* (12 November); see also IAURIF/GOPP (1994): 5, 47-8; al-Wali (1994): 248.

<sup>353</sup> Such views have been noted particularly within the local-government councils in the metropolitan governorates; see Markus Körner (1995) "Participatory Urban Upgrading in Egypt, Draft Programme Design, InterAktion - Köln (April): 8; Interviews. Asef Bayat, Sociology-Anthropology department, American University in Cairo, 4 March 1998; Linda Oldham, 11 April 1997; Taher (1997a): 10-11; (1986): 69; see also Kardash (1993): 156-7.

<sup>354</sup> Kuppinger (1995): 70-1, 78-84.

<sup>355</sup> Kuppinger (1995): 79.

<sup>356</sup> Gertel (forthcoming); Gertel & Kuppinger (1994): 280.

## A. TOP-DOWN CONTROLS

Such efforts are nothing new. Officials have periodically considered dramatic measures to curb the city's predominantly informal growth. For example, there have been repeated suggestions to make Cairo a "closed city." One such proposal was made in the mid 1960s, but they reoccur in the 1980s;<sup>357</sup> the early 1990s;<sup>358</sup> and perhaps as late as 2001.<sup>359</sup> Of course from the outset, such suggestions have been acknowledged as impractical and are predicated on a misunderstanding of Cairo's growth as driven by migration.<sup>360</sup> Yet they may nonetheless have an "expressive" function, signifying official concern with the city's problems.<sup>361</sup>

Officials have also sought to create physical barriers to informal growth. One justification given for the construction of the Cairo ring road in the 1983 French-backed master plan, was that it would halt the spread of periphery urbanization into the country-side (see also 5.5.1C).<sup>362</sup> But western planners were sceptical at the time, noting subsequently that the eventual layout of the ring road actually *facilitated* informal urbanization by increasing the accessibility of periphery neighbourhoods (see also 5.5.2C).<sup>363</sup>

At a more quotidian level, finally, Egyptian legislators have passed numerous laws prohibiting informal building and development supplemented by various implementing decrees, with the earliest dating back to 1923.<sup>364</sup> While the number of attempts to prohibit informal urbanization suggest their ineffectiveness—again they may be 'expressive'—some observers have suggested that a number of

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<sup>357</sup> In January 1983, for example, *al-Ahram* published a series of articles under the general heading "Before Cairo Becomes a Closed City"; see Ahmad Nasr al-Din (1983a) "Before Cairo Becomes a Closed City!" (in Arabic) *al-Ahram*, No. 35091 (9 January): 3; Mahmud Mu'awwad (1983) "Sewage Becomes Cairo's First Problem" (in Arabic) No. 35092 (10 January): 3; Ahmad Nasr al-Din (1983b) "What do the thirty recommendations for rescuing the capital say?" (in Arabic) No. 35094 (12 January): 3; with respect to press commentary, see also Sami Riyad (1982) "Cairo.. is not all Egypt" (in Arabic) *al-Ahram*, No. 35,076 (25 December): 7; Hasan al-Sharqawi (1982) "Billions of pounds lost in utilities projects: what is their value if we do not close Cairo immediately and stop building or move the capital?" (in Arabic) *al-Ahram*, No. 35,065 (14 December): 9; for references in the secondary literature, see Fathi Muhammad Musaylihi (1988) *Tatwir al-<sup>c</sup>asima al-misriyya wa-l-qahira al-kubra* [Development of the Egyptian Capital and Greater Cairo]. Self-published: 458, 477, 482-5; Raymond (2000): 342.

<sup>358</sup> Hasan <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Mun<sup>c</sup>im (1993) "The announcement of Cairo [as] a Closed City to Stop Migration to it and the <sup>c</sup>*Ashwa'i* Extension" (in Arabic) *al-Ahram* (8 December); Tahani Ibrahim (1993) "After 5 Years a New Direction for Cairo" (in Arabic) *Akhbar al-Yawm* (10 April); see also Michael M. Cernea (1993) "The Urban Environment and Population Relocation," World Bank Discussion Paper No. 152: 19 [Box 1].

<sup>359</sup> Miller (2006): 375-6.

<sup>360</sup> *al-Tali'a* (1969): 82; see also, Waterbury (1978): 128-9.

<sup>361</sup> Concerning the function of "expressive ideology," see Clement Henry Moore (1971) "On Theory and Practice Among Arabs," *World Politics*, 24, 1 (October): 106-7.

<sup>362</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983) "Greater Cairo Region Master Scheme," Ministry of Development, State Ministry for Housing and Land Reclamation: 7-4.

<sup>363</sup> For example, Sims (1990): 31-2, 36.

<sup>364</sup> Sims (2003): 12-13; Steinberg (1990): 113.

military orders announced in the summer of 1996 have been effective in curbing the process.<sup>365</sup>

## B. DEMOLITION & SANCTIONS

State agencies have periodically sought to back-up legal prohibitions with the removal of dilapidated and informal areas.<sup>366</sup> In the late 1970s, according to a former World-Bank consultant speaking privately, the Egyptian government told the Bank that it had a demolition plan, perhaps referring to the 1979 Bulaq and ‘Arab al-Muhammadi removals.<sup>367</sup> Judging by press reports, Mubarak’s first cabinet in the early 1980s was preoccupied with informal settlements on state land, urging governors to remove such encroachments with dispatch.<sup>368</sup> As already discussed (1.1.2B), the Cairo and Giza governorates designated approximately fifteen areas—housing some 190,000 people—for removal following the 1992 earthquake and Islamist clashes.<sup>369</sup> The main criterion for inclusion seemed to be that the neighbourhoods were not suitable for servicing;<sup>370</sup> many were of the squatter-pocket variety.<sup>371</sup>

Other, reportedly large, removals took place in the early 1990s in the south Cairo industrial neighbourhood of Helwan, in Matariyya and—on a smaller scale—in ‘Ayn Shams.<sup>372</sup> The then governor of Cairo, ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Akhir, advocated a comprehensive re-planning of the city, but succeeded mainly in removing a number of markets.<sup>373</sup> In the late 1990s, his successor Shehata proposed that land cleared of informal housing be sold to private-sector investors with the proceeds used to finance low-income housing and infrastructure projects.<sup>374</sup> While there is no

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<sup>365</sup> Sims (2003): 13-14.

<sup>366</sup> With respect to encroachment communities, see El Kadi (1992): 34.

<sup>367</sup> See also, El-Batran & El-Kholei (1996): 91.

<sup>368</sup> *Al-Musawwar* (1983) “A Comprehensive Plan which the Cabinet is looking into to Stop Encroachments on State Land” (in Arabic) No. 2996 (12 March): 13; see also, Jabr (1982).

<sup>369</sup> IDSC (n.d.) vol. 1: 9-10; IDSC (n.d.) “Report on High Density ‘Ashwa’iyya Areas in Some Governorates of the Republic,” volume 3, “The Basic Data of the *Manatiq* ‘Ashwa’iyya in Ten Governorates” (in Arabic), Prime Minister’s Office: [multiple page-numberings]; although undated, these two volumes date the clearance lists to January 1993; see also Kuppinger (2001): 202.

<sup>370</sup> IDSC (n.d.) vol. 1: 3.

<sup>371</sup> Sims (2003): 7.

<sup>372</sup> Concerning Helwan, see: Muhammad Bakr (1993) “Informal Housing Areas in Greater Cairo: Removal or Development?!” (in Arabic) *al-Musawwar* (23 April): 62; Mahmud Shakir (1992) “In Manshiet Helwan: 3000 families in the open air” (in Arabic) *al-Wafd* (5 September); concerning Matariyya, see: Raymond (2000): 353; concerning ‘Ayn Shams, see: *al-Ahram* (1993) “A Map to Define the Resources of Egypt” (in Arabic) No. 38,864 (30 May): 1.

<sup>373</sup> Kuppinger (2001): 196-7; Shakir (1993).

<sup>374</sup> Fatemah Farag (1997) “Out of sight,” *al-Ahram Weekly* (4-10 January): 13.

evidence that he was able to implement this initiative, informal areas on the 1993 lists were demolished during his tenure, as will be discussed shortly.

As already mentioned (2.4.1), state agencies have also sought to sanction informal development by denying such areas access to utility networks and other services. In one instance, these restrictions reportedly led to the cancellation of a donor-funded infrastructure project.<sup>375</sup> The denial-of-access policy was reportedly begun after 1977,<sup>376</sup> but apparently relaxed—at least for certain kinds of neighbourhoods—in 1981.<sup>377</sup> Yet other reports indicate that such prohibitions persisted.<sup>378</sup> Through the 1990s, for example, the public-sector company charged with developing the Fustat plateau (see Map 2.2) sought to dissuade informal encroachment by denying homesteaders water and electricity service.<sup>379</sup>

### C. THE DEMOLITION NON-OPTION

Yet the previously noted removals were likely exceptional. With respect to the 1990s, the evidence suggests that there was not a substantial new effort to demolish areas officially designated “*ashwa’iyya*”. To begin with, a 1996 United Nations Children’s Fund report—based on official consultations with the Cairo governorate—indicated that only one of the areas slated for demolition on its 1993 list had been cleared; two-thirds of them were to be dealt with in 2000.<sup>380</sup> Research and fieldwork in 1998 to determine the status of the fifteen areas on the Cairo and Giza governorate removal lists yielded evidence of three clearances in the former, one of which was only partial.<sup>381</sup> At least eight areas in Cairo and Giza remained in place<sup>382</sup> and of these, approximately five had been re-designated for upgrading.<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 193.

<sup>376</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 192.

<sup>377</sup> Arandel & El-Batran (1997): 22.

<sup>378</sup> Inas ‘Abd al-‘Alim (1993) “The *Manatiq ‘Ashwa’iyya*.. An Uncertain Birth Between Agriculture, Districts and Survey” (in Arabic) *al-Ahram* (18 April); UNICEF (1996): 2; see also, IAURIF/GOPP (1995) “El-Monira: Structure Plan and Local Project,” State Ministry of New Communities (April): 16.

<sup>379</sup> Deboulet (1994): 498, 522-4; private donor reporting indicated that this practice was ongoing in 1998.

<sup>380</sup> Iman Bibars (1996) “EMICS Results for Cairo and Alexandria (Planned and Unplanned) and some data from the two Governorates’ MDG Reports for 1996,” typescript: 1.

<sup>381</sup> The three clearances cases were, first, a community on the Isma‘iliyya canal in ‘Ayn Shams; see al-Wali (1994): 275; ‘Izbat Abu Hashish in north Cairo; see Interview, Khalid ‘Ali ‘Umar, attorney, Centre for Human Rights Legal Aid, Cairo, 5 May 1998; Personal communication, Fatemah Farag, journalist, *al-Ahram Weekly*, 7 May 1998; second, the ‘Abbasiyya neighbourhood of ‘Izbat Ali Abu Nur in Autumn 1998; see ‘Afaf al-Sa‘id (1998) “The Clearance of ‘Izbat Abu al-Nur and Its Transformation into a Public Garden” (in Arabic) *al-Akhbar* (25 October); Samir Buhayri (1998) “The Cairo Governorate Deceives in the Inhabitants of ‘Izbat al-Nur Twice” (in Arabic) *al-Wafd* (24 October); finally, the partial clearance was of al-Fakhariyya (the potteries), part of ‘Izbat Abu Qarn—a neighbourhood slated for removal on the 1993 list—in Misr al-Qadima; see EOHR [Egyptian Organization for Human Rights] (1998) “The ‘*Ashwa’iyyat*” (in Arabic) *Huquq al-Insan*, No. 32-33 (February / April): 3-4; al-Jeel Centre for Youth and Social Studies (n.d.) “Works and



The absence of a systematic campaign against the *‘ashwa’iyyat* was evident in other respects. The 1993 lists were not the first time that some areas had been slated for demolition.<sup>384</sup> Therefore their inclusion was not necessarily a sign of national resolve to tackle the pathologies of the novel *‘ashwa’iyyat* phenomenon, but rather one in a series of attempts by Cairo officials to displace areas long deemed undesirable. Where clearances did place—sometimes in areas *not* on the demolitions list—they often seemed the result of external factors. Most commonly, areas were removed to make way for public-sector projects<sup>385</sup>—for example major road works.<sup>386</sup> This observation confirms the broader point that informal areas are unlikely to be cleared simply by virtue of being informal.

On the whole, such clearances of dilapidated and informal areas as do take place, tend to be protracted,<sup>387</sup> short-lived and fairly small-scale.<sup>388</sup> Even if all areas on the 1993 lists had been demolished, the removal of these mainly squatter-pocket

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Communications of the al-Jeel Centre Concerning al-Fakhariyya” (in Arabic) a file of documents, correspondence and reportage, *‘Ayn al-Sira*, South Cairo (Consulted May 1998).

<sup>382</sup> These were Hikr Abu Duma and Hikr Sekikini in north Cairo; *‘Izbat Abu Qarn* (despite clearance of the al-Fakhariyya area); Talal Zaynhum, Qalat al-Kabsh and Tal al-*‘Aqarab* in the Sayyida Zaynab area; “*El Tayibin*” [*pseud.*] in Giza; and Dayir al-Nahiyya in Doqqi; and al-Hutiyya in *‘Aguza*. The continuing existence of these neighbourhoods was verified through visits during the course of fieldwork in the Spring of 1998, except for Hikr Abu Duma, Hikr Sekikini and al-Hutiyya; concerning Hikr Abu Duma, see Fahmy (2004): 608-10; Sims (2003): 13; concerning Hikr Sekikini and al-Hutiyya, see next footnote.

<sup>383</sup> These were Hikr Sekikini, Tilal Zaynhum, Qalat al-Kabsh, al-Hutiyya and al-Fakhariyya in *‘Izbat Abu Qarn*; concerning the first three, see Interview, Nady Kamel, Assistant Director, Development Sector, Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (27 April 1998); see also, Mahmoud Bakr (1997) “Slum hill gets overhaul,” *al-Ahram Weekly* (24-30 April): 13; Sims (1998); concerning al-Hutiyya, see Fayza Hassan (1998) “Living in a shoe,” *al-Ahram Weekly*, No. 370 (26 March - 1 April): 14; NCSCR [National Centre for Social and Criminological Research] (1998) “Workshop: The Social Survey of the Area of ‘al-Hutiyya’ in al-*‘Ajuza* - a Study of the Social and Economic Standards of an *‘Ashwa’iyya* Area” (in Arabic), Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs (17 March): *esp.* 18 [*Sec. 3*]); concerning al-Fakhariyya, see Bell (forthcoming).

<sup>384</sup> For example with respect to Hikr Abu Duma, see Waterbury (1978): 183; GOPP & Doxiadis Associates International (1977): 62.

<sup>385</sup> Raymond (2000): 353; Sims (2002): 94.

<sup>386</sup> For examples, see Leila Atracchi (1998) “26th of July Axis enters Phase II,” *Business Monthly*, American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt (September), [http://www.amcham.org.eg/Publications/BusinessMonthly/September%2098/reports\(26thofjulyaxisentersphaseii\).asp](http://www.amcham.org.eg/Publications/BusinessMonthly/September%2098/reports(26thofjulyaxisentersphaseii).asp), 13 August 2005; M. Scott Bortot (1999) “Poor Residents Get Short End of the Stick,” *Middle East Times* (24 September), [http://metimes.com/issue99-39/commu/poor-residents\\_get.htm](http://metimes.com/issue99-39/commu/poor-residents_get.htm), 13 November 1999; Fatemah Farag (1998) “My House, My Life,” *al-Ahram Weekly* (2-8 April): 3; (1997): 13; GOPP (1991) “The Development of *‘Ashwa’iyya* Areas in Cairo: the Area North of Basatin” (in Arabic), Final Report - Structure Planning and Urban Development (January): 12; GTZ (1995): 10; Taher (1986): 86-102; WOAT/ECHR (2002).

<sup>387</sup> For example, the 1979 Bulaq clearance was mooted perhaps as early as 1964; see Salah Said (1964) “An Approach to Housing Design for Low Income Groups in Cairo, Egypt, UAR,” PhD dissertation, Catholic University of America: 69; it and the *‘Arab al-Muhammadi* removal were officially announced in 1971, see *al-Ahram* (1971) “The Clearance of Five Old Districts in Cairo and Their Reconstruction” (in Arabic) No. 30,856 (8 June): 4.

<sup>388</sup> El-Batran & El-Kholei (1996): 87-8; Raymond (2000): 353; Soliman (2004a): 188.

neighbourhoods would have had little demographic impact on informal Cairo. Hence state attempts to sanction informal urbanization by means of demolition have been almost uniformly unsuccessful. Its slowing in the late 1980s and 1990s was rather a consequence of the apparent downturn in remittances from the Gulf, as well as increased land prices and accessibility problems.<sup>389</sup> Similarly, there are few indications of large-scale removals—at least successful ones—of settlements encroaching on state land.<sup>390</sup> Thus the available evidence suggests that state policy towards the *‘ashwa’iyyat* must be seen as one of tolerance or neglect, despite occasional removals in the service of other goals.

#### D. THE DURABILITY OF THE INFORMAL

But evidence for the durability of informal Cairo is not, by itself, an explanation for why the *‘ashwa’iyyat* discourse was not accompanied by demolitions. To begin with, a number of factors have apparently complicated the large-scale removal of buildings without planning permission. For example, finished buildings or those in excess of one floor have been legally more difficult to demolish even if they violated land-use or building regulations.<sup>391</sup> Not only have various legal loop-holes complicated removals,<sup>392</sup> courts have ruled on behalf of the homesteaders—even those occupying government land<sup>393</sup>—and “the sanction on the individual’s right to develop private property” has also generally protected urban-periphery developers.<sup>394</sup>

That said, the 1996 military orders supposedly eliminated many of these loop-holes.<sup>395</sup> Even where the necessary legal instruments were in place, moreover, building curbs have rarely been enforced.<sup>396</sup> Yet there are also reports of cases where demolitions have taken place either without court orders or where orders had been issued prohibiting removal.<sup>397</sup> Hence the significance of legal considerations should probably not be over-stated. While officials claimed in the 1980s that the police were overwhelmed by the scale of illegal building,<sup>398</sup> there have been numerous reports of enforcement agents being bribed to overlook

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<sup>389</sup> Sims (2003): 13; (1990): 17-18.

<sup>390</sup> Sims (2000): 22; 1990: 15; see also Deboulet (1994): 496-7, 525; Oldham et al. (1987): 84; Soliman (2004a): 186; Tekçe et al. (1994): 23.

<sup>391</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 42; Soliman (2004a): 186.

<sup>392</sup> PADCO (1982) “National Urban Policy Study - Urban Management Handbook,” Prepared for the Advisory Committee for Reconstruction, Ministry of Development, Arab Republic of Egypt, USAID Grant No. 263-0042 (31 July): 34-6.

<sup>393</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 191.

<sup>394</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 36; see also Sims (2002): 81; Steinberg (1990): 115.

<sup>395</sup> Sims (2000 ): 18.

<sup>396</sup> Joint Land Policy Team (1977b): 57, 98.

<sup>397</sup> For example, see WOAT/ECHR (2002).

<sup>398</sup> For example, Mayo et al. (1982): 46.

violations.<sup>399</sup> Even the 1996 military orders may have been subverted by the sale of exemptions,<sup>400</sup> with one veteran observer believing that urban-periphery development continues where “local officials are partners in the game.”<sup>401</sup> They were eventually abolished in 2004 on the grounds that they had actually spurred informal urbanization.<sup>402</sup>

A different kind of explanation is that of *sha‘bi* ‘street politics’: the security forces may practice risk avoidance or be worn down by the persistence of informal homesteaders who return despite removal.<sup>403</sup> As one Egyptian academic has written: “I have with my [own] eyes seen the failure of particular government agencies in clearing part of a belt of shacks in north Cairo despite a huge army of bulldozers and security men etc.”<sup>404</sup> That the security forces practice risk avoidance is suggested, in general terms, by a February 1993 opposition-press report that the Shurtat al-Marafiq were refusing to implement clearance decrees in Imbaba because of the “security situation.”<sup>405</sup> An Egyptian researcher with links to the ruling party has asserted, moreover, that the interior ministry’s obligation to prepare a “public safety report” prior to any housing demolition has often precluded such clearances.<sup>406</sup>

While bribery cannot be ruled out as a possible explanation, a number of more specific examples suggest that the security forces sometimes retreat from violent clashes, or seek to avoid them, when faced with housing infringements.<sup>407</sup> For example, eviction attempts in ‘Izbat al-Haggana reportedly ceased in 1991, after soldiers were killed in clashes between settlers and the army.<sup>408</sup> The logic of risk avoidance appears evident in the case of a surprisingly resilient squatter pocket on the edge of Muhandisin in the mid 1980s. Local-government councillors complained that:

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<sup>399</sup> For example, Fahmy (2004): 605-7; El-Messiri (1985): 261 Sims (2003): 13; (2002): 82; 2001: 2; Soliman (2004a): 112-13.

<sup>400</sup> Interview, Manal El Batran, Housing and Building Research Centre, Cairo, 20 March 1998.

<sup>401</sup> Sims (2000): 18.

<sup>402</sup> Ayman Ibrahim Kamel el-Hefnawi (2005) “Protecting Agricultural Land from Urbanization or ‘Managing’ the Conflict Between Informal Urban Growth while Meeting the Demands of the Communities (Lessons Learnt from the Egyptian Policy Reforms,” Third Urban Research Symposium on ‘Land Development, Urban Policy and Poverty Reduction’ Brasilia, DF, Brasil, (April): 17.

<sup>403</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 191; el-Messiri (1985): 261; Sims (2002): 94.

<sup>404</sup> Musaylihi (1988): 476.

<sup>405</sup> Khalid Idris (1993) “Imbaba threatened by the return of the terror!” (in Arabic) *al-Wafd* (22 February).

<sup>406</sup> El-Hefnawi (2005): 13.

<sup>407</sup> See also Interview, Khalid ‘Ali ‘Umar, 5 May 1998.

<sup>408</sup> Soliman (2004a): 186.

every time they succeed in getting an order for eviction one of [their colleagues] rushes to the responsible person in the governorate saying that those people in the shanties will be left homeless, and that he is not responsible for what they will do if they are thrown out of their homes. He thus succeeded in intimidating them.<sup>409</sup>

Hence bottom-up resistance may constrain state interventions. For example, the neighbourhood of “El Tayibin” in Giza has a history of resistance to removal efforts.<sup>410</sup> In the weeks following the 1992 earthquake, the Giza governorate sought to clear the area on the pretext that it had been severely damaged. Neighbourhood youth activists claimed that they brought the community into the streets and faced down engineers from the Arab Contractors company—supported by the Shurtat al-Marafiq—who had come to mark buildings for demolition.<sup>411</sup> The clearance effort subsequently bogged down in legal challenges and counter-challenges.

Such communities, moreover, do not resist alone. In the spring of 1998, the survey authority announced plans to clear substantial portions of Ard al-Liwa’ Gadida—a Giza urban fringe community north-west of Bulaq al-Dakrur—in order to construct a ring-road traffic interchange.<sup>412</sup> Community members sought legal assistance from a legal NGO, the Center for Human Rights Legal Aid (CHRLA), and were supported by an activist network, loosely affiliated with the left-wing Tagammu’ party, which helped organize the Popular Committee for the Defence of the People of Ard al-Liwa’. While a CHRLA attorney mounted a legal challenge to the removal, the activists published pamphlets, solicited sympathetic media coverage, contacted activists with experience from other clearance cases and sought to maintain community cohesion in the face of government efforts to divide it.<sup>413</sup> As of 2001, the neighbourhood was still in place.<sup>414</sup> This mobilization was not an isolated case: other communities have managed to secure sympathetic press coverage, in so doing contesting and even blocking some removal efforts.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> Taher (1986): 69.

<sup>410</sup> Petra Kuppinger (2006) “Pyramids and Alleys: Global Dynamics and Local Strategies in Giza” in Diane Singerman & Paul Amar eds., *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Middle East*. American University in Cairo Press: 328; (1990) “El Tayibin: The Political Economy of a Cairene Low Income Community,” MA thesis, American University in Cairo: 78-9; “El Tayibin” is a pseudonym originally given to the area by Kuppinger.

<sup>411</sup> Field notes, 24 May 1998; interestingly, Kuppinger’s (2001) account of the community in this period does not mention the incident.

<sup>412</sup> Farag (1998): 3

<sup>413</sup> Field notes, May 1998.

<sup>414</sup> Personal communication, David Sims, EMS project economist and urban-development consultant, 2 May 2001.

<sup>415</sup> Concerning the case of Baragil in Giza, see Mariz Tadros (1998) “The Day the Bulldozers Came,” *al-Ahram Weekly* (26 February—4 March): 2; concerning the case of Gazirat al-Waraq & al-Dahab, see Bell (forthcoming); see also, Land Centre for Human Rights (2001) “Public Benefit Illusion in Daheb and Warak,” typescript statement (7 September); Steve Negus (2001a) “Parliament and TV,” *Middle East International*, No. 652 (15 June): 14-15; WOAT/ECHR (2002).

In still other cases, communities may also be able to lobby government officials directly and mobilize local notables on their behalf.<sup>416</sup> One observer has claimed that state's "laxity" *vis-à-vis* informal Cairo is the result of pressure from local notables turned ruling party functionaries—who are the primary beneficiaries of the land-development process.<sup>417</sup> Such sweeping claims are difficult to substantiate, but there are a variety of anecdotal accounts of notables and other officials intervening on behalf of threatened neighbourhoods.<sup>418</sup> 'Izbat al-Haggana—in part comprised of former soldiers—may even have received protection by the defence ministry.<sup>419</sup> Finally, even after areas are cleared, they may nonetheless be re-settled, either by the previous or new homesteaders.<sup>420</sup> Hence press reports of clearances, however accurate, may offer only snap-shots of an ongoing process.

#### E. TOP-DOWN EXPLANATIONS

Nonetheless, the significance of bottom-up resistance is not uniform. In early January 1998, security forces from the Cairo governorate began to demolish houses and kilns in al-Fakhariyya (the potteries)—part of 'Izbat Abu Qarn, a community on the 1993 list—near Misr al-Qadima in South Cairo.<sup>421</sup> The clearance precipitated a small riot, leading to casualties and mass arrests. Community members then approached CHRLA and a south Cairo social-development NGO for assistance. Although the arrested were eventually released, the community was unable to secure compensation.<sup>422</sup> The area was subject to further removal attempts before securing a partial reprieve in 1999.<sup>423</sup>

In certain circumstances, therefore, state agencies may act against neighbourhoods, regardless of resistance, legal assistance or outside advocacy. More generally, there is also ample evidence of highly predatory behaviour on the part of the state agents charged with keeping order in informal areas.<sup>424</sup> Informal homesteaders may be

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<sup>416</sup> Taher (1986): 90.

<sup>417</sup> El Kadi (1988): 35.

<sup>418</sup> Kardash (1993): 161; Yasser Sherif et al. (1996) "Elements of the Egyptian Partnership Experience in Urban Development," Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment (LIFE) Programme: 21; Soliman (2004a): 188; Taher (1986): 69, 90; al-Wali (1994): 268; see also, Interview, Yahya al-Gamal, professor of law at Cairo University and former cabinet minister under Sadat, Cairo, 3 May 1998.

<sup>419</sup> Soliman (2004a): 175, 191.

<sup>420</sup> Fahmy (2004): 605; Gertel & Kuppinger (1994): 86 [*fn* 21]; Potteries clearance affidavit in the al-Jeel Centre for Youth and Social Studies (n.d.); Interview, Cilja Harders Institut für Politische Wissenschaft, Universität Hamburg, Cairo, 18 March 1998; see also, Bayat (2002): 22; Kuppinger (2001): 205; Field notes, 17 May 1998.

<sup>421</sup> EOHR (1998): 3-4.

<sup>422</sup> Fatemah Farag (1999a) "Hands of Clay," *al-Ahram Weekly*, No 421 (18-24 March), <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/1999/421/feature.htm>; 28 May 2004.

<sup>423</sup> Bell (forthcoming).

<sup>424</sup> Harders (1998): 10-11; Ismail (2001): 16-21.

subject to repeated threats of eviction and demands for bribes by governorate officials.<sup>425</sup> Indeed, demolition attempts may be simply a means by which the police extort pay-offs.<sup>426</sup>

Still, the question remains of explaining why such interventions are not more routine. Rather than exaggerating the extent of official timorousness or benevolence, however, the explanation should take into account the more general, perhaps top-down, factors which constrain state intervention against informal areas. In some cases, political calculations may figure: in 1995, clearance attempts against informal markets ceased prior to the local-government elections.<sup>427</sup> Moreover, there is evidence that—social pathology discourses notwithstanding—officials have been well aware that informal homesteading is driven by necessity and that Cairo's growth had rendered the formal urban planning order unenforceable.<sup>428</sup> For example, a 1982 ministerial memorandum prepared by Nabawi Ismail—an interior minister under Sadat and moved by Mubarak into the local-government portfolio—noted that the defence of state property must be balanced by “social considerations” and that removals not be undertaken against large communities.<sup>429</sup>

Hence the most important factor—noted obliquely in the above memorandum—is that governorates and ministries do not have the resources to re-house all who would be affected by large-scale removals. That they are obliged to do so, is often referred to as a “legal requirement”<sup>430</sup> and—judging by the ubiquity of references to compensation and alternative housing in media reportage and commentary—is a key social-contract expectation structuring public discussions of the *‘ashwa’iyyat* issue.<sup>431</sup> It can be understood as risk avoidance insofar as state officials are unwilling to contemplate mass displacements without compensation.<sup>432</sup>

Thus cabinet ministers have conceded that large-scale removals are beyond the means of the state,<sup>433</sup> a view shared by most observers.<sup>434</sup> Given the difficulties

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<sup>425</sup> Fahmy (2004): 605-6; Sims (2003): 19.

<sup>426</sup> Fahmy (2004): 607.

<sup>427</sup> Ahmed Yousry (1995) “Boulaq ElDakrour Participatory Upgrading Project: an Assessment of Scope and Nature of Urban Management,” consultancy paper prepared for the GTZ Project Appraisal Mission (December): 5; see also EQI (1995): 6.

<sup>428</sup> Harik (1997): 169-70; Taher (1997a): 10; Tekçe et al. (1994): 11; see also Interview, Mustafa al-Hefnawi, 6 May 1998;

<sup>429</sup> *Al-Musawwar* (1983): 13.

<sup>430</sup> Sims (2002): 82; see also, Sahar el-Bahr (1993) “Neglected but won't be forgotten,” *al-Ahram Weekly* (29 July-4 August): 11; Bakr (1993): 62; Sims (2000): 28.

<sup>431</sup> For examples pertaining to the 1993 clearance lists, see IAURIF/GOPP (1995) “Aqueduct Area Project: Beautification, Relocations, Detailed Program, Phasing,” Report No. 6, State Ministry of New Communities (June): 74; Muhammad (1993).

<sup>432</sup> Sims (2002): 93-4; Interview, Nady Kamel, 27 April 1998.

<sup>433</sup> El-Bahr (1993) : 11; see also, al-Sawi (1996): 108; Interview, Magda Metwally, Chief, Building and Housing Office, Housing and Building Research Centre, 16 March 1998.

involved in re-housing as many as 15,000 families left homeless after the October 1992 earthquake,<sup>435</sup> the governorates are unlikely to be able to accommodate easily the at least 190,000 Cairenes living in the neighbourhoods included on the 1993 demolition lists—let alone the 6-7 million who comprise informal Cairo more generally.<sup>436</sup> So although the housing ministry announced the clearance and rebuilding of Manshiet Nasser—with an estimated population of 400,000—in the late 1990s, the scheme proved “unrealistic” and was never seriously implemented.<sup>437</sup> Such structural and political considerations have allowed informal Cairo to flourish—the *‘ashwa’iyyat* discourse notwithstanding—as an essentially tolerated zone.

### 2.5.3 THE ILLEGAL CITY?

Yet even the underlying dichotomy of the Egyptian state versus a putatively illegal informal sector—an assumption of both the *‘ashwa’iyyat* and popular-agency discourses—is exaggerated. While state officials make a show of adherence to legal norms in their pronouncements,<sup>438</sup> private donor reporting concerning a series of proposed south-Cairo clearances in the late 1990s noted the lack of clear regulations governing informal communities and their removal. So although Egyptian writings on informal housing often refer to pertinent statutes,<sup>439</sup> a number of factors suggest that formal legality does not offer a useful framework for understanding the state’s relationship with informal Cairo.

To begin with, the *de facto* toleration of informality by successive governments, the sometimes informal character of their rule and the legal opacity characteristic of the post-1952 period more generally, undermine the presumption of a regulating state. Indeed, some neighbourhoods are not as illegal as they appear. Moreover, the dichotomy fails to take into account the informalizing impact of the post-1952 political order on Egyptian society. Hence it is misleading to assume that “the state is in one place, informality in another.”<sup>440</sup> At least in Cairo, the two are interpenetrated.

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<sup>434</sup> Sims (2002): 93; see also Harik (1997): 174; Kuppinger (2001): 205; Taher (1986): 72.

<sup>435</sup> Degg (1993): 232; Kuppinger (2001): 191.

<sup>436</sup> Sims (1998): 4; see also Kuppinger (2001): 205.

<sup>437</sup> Sims (2002): 86 [Box 5.1].

<sup>438</sup> For example, see Farag (1999b).

<sup>439</sup> For example, see Ahmad Khalid ‘Allam (1994) “Organizing Legislation for the Urban Environment” (in Arabic) in *Upgrading of Informal Settlements: Priorities and Alternatives*. Preparatory Activities to Habitat II, Society for Upgrading the Built Environment, “al-‘Ashwa’iyyat” Conference Proceedings (15-17 May): [no page numbering].

<sup>440</sup> Julia Elyachar (2003) “Mappings of Power: the State, NGOs, and International Organizations in the Informal Economy of Cairo,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45, 3 (July): 579.

## A. DEGREES OF PERMISSION

Claims that the *‘ashwa’iyyat* are outside the law are simplistic. Some of Cairo’s informal neighbourhoods have received a degree of tacit sanction. With respect to urban-periphery urbanization, the evidence of support—as opposed to indifference or toleration—is relatively limited. One account cites a March 1983 statement by the deputy prime minister and agricultural minister—presumably referring to Yusuf Wali—claiming that “the state was turning to the interest of the population which built on agricultural lands before 1985.”<sup>441</sup>

There is considerably more evidence suggesting that encroachments on state land are not straight-forwardly illegal. To begin with, one veteran observer notes that “there has not been a monolithic consistent policy of preserving State desert land from encroachment,” as under various circumstances its development has “been sanctioned and even, at times, encouraged.”<sup>442</sup> There are various legal mechanisms—including a system of ground rent—whereby homesteaders on state land may secure at least “relatively secure tenure.”<sup>443</sup>

At a minimum, encroachments on state land have been “condoned or allowed to occur as long as the land in question was of little value or had not already been assigned to institutions that had the power or influence to protect it.”<sup>444</sup> Indeed, some such communities may have actually had a greater degree of top-down sanction. For example, *‘Izbat al-Haggana* originated as an encampment for the families of border guards prior to 1952 and came to service nearby military facilities.<sup>445</sup> Other squatter-pocket settlements began as government-built emergency shelters providing temporary accommodation for displaced families.<sup>446</sup> They became rather more permanent, however, attracting new homesteaders and eventually constituting the core of a larger neighbourhood.<sup>447</sup> In still other areas, homesteaders claim to have been relocated by the state and even given building materials.<sup>448</sup>

Perhaps the best documented case of such sanctioned relocation is that of Manshiet Nasser, originally settled by a squatter community from Gamaliyya which was

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<sup>441</sup> Musaylihi (1988): 448; see also Singerman (1999): 25.

<sup>442</sup> Sims (2000): 21.

<sup>443</sup> Sims (2002): 92.

<sup>444</sup> Sims (2002): 82-3; see also Soliman (1987): 30.

<sup>445</sup> Sims (2002): 88-9 [*Box 5.2*]; (1984): 1; Soliman (2004a): 186.

<sup>446</sup> Madiha El-Safty (1985) “Social Aspects of Urban Planning” in *The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo*. The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Proceedings of Seminar Nine in the Series ‘Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World’, Cairo, Egypt (November 11-15, 1984): 143; Sims (1998): 6; Taher (1986): 78-85.

<sup>447</sup> Sims (1998): 6; Taher (1986): 78.

<sup>448</sup> Hanan *‘Uthman* & Nadia Subhi (1994) “They are living.. danger!” (in Arabic) *al-Wafd* (26 February).



displaced to make way for a hospital.<sup>449</sup> Community leaders negotiated with local parliamentarians, eventually receiving “tacit permission” to establish what became Manshiet Nasser.<sup>450</sup> In so doing, they relieved state officials of the risks of forcible clearance and the necessity of formal resettlement, suggesting Ahmed Soliman’s observation that “illegality continues to be a useful way in which the government permits the poor to occupy the worse residential land.”<sup>451</sup>

## B. DEGREES OF AMBIGUITY

But even where there are few obvious indications of top-down approval, informal neighbourhood may not be straight-forwardly illegal. An ‘Ayn-Shams settlement began as a planned subdivision in the 1950s, the development of which was halted in the early 1960s with the nationalization of the subdivision company. While title to the unsold land reverted to the government, and was subsequently settled informally, even purchasers of the original planned portions were reportedly unable to establish clear title to their properties because of “poor record keeping” following the sequestration.<sup>452</sup> In a nearby neighbourhood on the outskirts of Matariyya, where the departure of Egyptian Jews after 1948 had precipitated an extensive turnover of holdings, a combination of land usurpation by local elites and “the pusillanimity of the public authorities” means that “it is difficult today to distinguish precisely between the true purchasers and the fraudulent.”<sup>453</sup>

Moreover, the various intermediate layers between public and private property introduce further complexities. For example, “El-Tayibin” in Giza was originally sited on *waqf* (religious trust) land and occupied on the basis of long-term ground-rent contracts.<sup>454</sup> With the gradual expiration of the contracts—the *waqf* system having been abolished in 1952<sup>455</sup> and all such contracts supposedly liquidated by 1960—the community has been left in a state of legal limbo.<sup>456</sup> While in principle the land can be bought by its occupiers at market prices, its considerable value and

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<sup>449</sup> Tekçe et al. (1994): 24.

<sup>450</sup> Tekçe et al. (1994): 24; see also Oldham et al. (1987): 83.

<sup>451</sup> Ahmed Mounir Soliman (1987) “Informal Land Acquisition and the Urban Poor in Alexandria,” *Third World Planning Review*, 9, 1 (February): 30

<sup>452</sup> Joint Housing and Community Upgrading Team (1977) “Housing and Community Upgrading for Low-Income Egyptians,” Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction, Ministry of Planning with Office of Housing, Agency for International Development (August): 98.

<sup>453</sup> El Kadi (1988): 29.

<sup>454</sup> Field notes, 17 May 1998.

<sup>455</sup> For a concise discussion, see Gabriel Baer (1982) “Hikr” in C.E. Bosworth et al. eds. *Encyclopaedia of Islam - New Edition, Supplement Fascicules 5-6*. E.J. Brill: 368-70.

<sup>456</sup> Field notes, 17 & 19 May 1998.

their relative poverty makes this solution practically impossible<sup>457</sup> and leaves them vulnerable to expulsion.<sup>458</sup>

Taken together with the examples of *de facto* state permission for informal homesteading, these cases suggest that the status of any given informal community—especially if on state land—is more likely to be contested, than straight-forwardly illegal.<sup>459</sup>

### C. THE INFORMALIZING STATE

Besides further undermining any notion of the Egyptian state as regulator, such cases also raise the issue of how state policies—as well as the less formal activities of its officials—may have precipitated or facilitated informal urbanization. To begin with, a certain amount of informality may derive from the complexities and venalities of the formal land-development and building-permission processes.<sup>460</sup> In the absence of meaningful enforcement and given the irregular building practices of even elite Egyptians, the bulk of residential property in Cairo can be classed as ‘informal’ by virtue of some degree of non-compliance.<sup>461</sup> This fact further collapses notions of the *‘ashwa’iyyat* as a zone somehow apart from the rest of Egyptian society.

More generally, despite the putative desire by state officials to defend arable land in the 1980s, the conditions of possibility for the informal urbanization of the countryside include the officially sanctioned development—for example various factories and housing complexes in north Cairo<sup>462</sup>—beginning in the 1950s if not earlier.<sup>463</sup> For reasons to be explored later (see 5.6.2), state agencies have sometimes found it difficult to gain access to desert land, so much of Cairo’s ‘formal’ growth has also taken place in agricultural areas.<sup>464</sup> As a semi-official magazine observed in

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<sup>457</sup> Field notes, 17 May 1998; that said, some residents had formed a community-development association to do so.

<sup>458</sup> Kuppinger (2001): 192.

<sup>459</sup> For a similar argument with respect to informal settlement in Jordan, see Omar Munif Razzaz (1991) “Law Urban Land Tenure, and Property Disputes in Contested Settlements: the Case of Jordan,” PhD dissertation, Harvard University: 7-8.

<sup>460</sup> Hernando De Soto (1997b) “Dead Capital and the Poor in Egypt (Appendices),” Distinguished Lecture Series in Egypt No 11, Egyptian Center for Economic Studies: Flowchart No 1, 16-22; see also, El Araby (2003): 445; CDC (1997): 41; Fahmy (2004): 607; Sims (2000): 41.

<sup>461</sup> Hernando De Soto (1997a) “Dead Capital and the Poor in Egypt,” Distinguished Lecture Series in Egypt No 11, Egyptian Center for Economic Studies: 7; Ahmed M. Soliman (2004b) “Tilting at Sphinxes: Locating Urban Informality in Egypt” in Ananya Roy & Nezar Alsayyad eds., *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia*. Lexington Books: 194-7, 199 [Figure 7.13].

<sup>462</sup> Dames & Moore (1981): 4-24; El Kadi (1990): 191; Sims (2003): 11.

<sup>463</sup> El Kadi (1990): 191; (1988): 24; see also (1987/1988): 168.

<sup>464</sup> Soliman (2004a): 47; see also, Interview, Jean-Emmanuel Cornu, IAURIF project manager (June 1981–July 1986), Greater Cairo Region Master Scheme, Paris, 26 March 2001.

1982: “the government represents the largest sector in encroachments on fertile areas under cultivation, despite passing laws to prevent encroachments on fertile land.”<sup>465</sup>

Hence the simple dichotomy of the state versus the informal sector is profoundly misleading. In some cases the relationship may be better understood in terms of top-down versus bottom-up informalities. For example, the growth of informal Cairo is also linked to a highly opaque politics of land speculation (see 5.6.2). Various sources suggest that state agencies and their officials have seized, occupied or otherwise appropriated both public and private properties for parochial purposes or personal use.<sup>466</sup> Such claims are supported—and the more general point about opacity demonstrated—by the absence of mapping and clear demarcation of land claims on Cairo’s desert periphery.<sup>467</sup> With respect to informal areas in particular, one Franco-Egyptian observer has charged state officials with displaying “unprecedented laxity towards the appropriation of land equipped by the state” by politically well-connected “large local capitals and urban notables.”<sup>468</sup> Despite anecdotal reports of state officials selling off public land without authorization, suggestions of more systematic collusion are difficult to demonstrate.<sup>469</sup> Perhaps the best documented case is that of the Egyptian military’s involvement in ‘Izbat al-Haggana where it may have sold plots to homesteaders and sometimes defended the area from removal.<sup>470</sup>

#### 2.5.4 UPGRADING & NEGLECT

This scepticism about the illegality of informal Cairo is supported by the account of a local-government official in north-east Cairo speaking candidly about informal urbanization.

[It is] housing for which the state provided no services—water, electricity, roads, or lighting. People who build in such conditions enjoyed cheaper prices in exchange for doing without these services. Those who lived in informal settlements had to provide for themselves, until they were established enough that the state had to recognize them, such as had

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<sup>465</sup> Jabr (1982): 26.

<sup>466</sup> For examples, see Elyachar (2003): 574, 593; Springborg (1998): 5-6; (1989): 114; more generally, see ‘Abdullah Imam (1982) “Gangs Specialized in Robbing the State” (in Arabic) *Ruz al-Yusuf* (1 March): 22-4.

<sup>467</sup> Mitchell (2002): 273; Kevin Tayler & Ian Green (n.d.) “A Constraints Given Approach to Development: Lessons from Two Projects in Egypt,” typescript: 9; see also, Elyachar (2003): 574-5, 592.

<sup>468</sup> El Kadi (1988): 27.

<sup>469</sup> For example, Taher (1986): 65.

<sup>470</sup> Interview, Laurent Bécard, IAURIF chief town planner (1983-86), consultant (1986-91), Greater Cairo Region Master Scheme, Paris, 27 March 2001; Soliman (2004a): 175; see also GOPP/IAURIF (1987) “Urban Dynamics and Informal Housing in Cairo—Part A: Report,” Ministry of Development, New Communities, Housing and Utilities (December): 15.

happened in Manshiet Nasser. Those living in informal housing had the right to build, he explained, but not to demand anything from the state.<sup>471</sup>

Note the absence of any obvious concern for the nominal illegality or putative disorder of *‘ashwa’iyyat*. Rather the only issue is one of providing infrastructure to communities already in place, a view probably shared by many western students of Cairo’s development, for whom social-pathology discourses are merely background.<sup>472</sup>

But the official’s remarks also implicitly point to top-down financial constraints—including heavy subsidies such that beneficiaries pay only a fraction of the cost of service provision—meaning that only limited servicing is available via routine channels.<sup>473</sup> As will become apparent in subsequent chapters, particularly the discussion of wastewater in Chapter 6, major investments in infrastructure and servicing have tended to come through international donors. Given the scarcity of resources *vis-à-vis* need, the real state-society politics of informal Cairo is the process of bargaining or clientelism through which communities seek the top-down distribution of infrastructure. State officials may rebuff such claims—or exploit them.

#### A. UPGRADING & REGULARIZATION

The Egyptian state’s governance, since the 1990s, might be most positively understood as the eventual realization of the “political reality of informal communities” such that “policy makers’ perceptions of the problem started to change to *acceptance*.”<sup>474</sup> Acceptance may entail the legalization of buildings without planning permission; the regularization, or titling, of communities on state land and—despite the formal ban on infrastructure connections—the servicing of informal areas more generally. Indeed, Mubarak’s personal statements on the *‘ashwa’iyyat* after Autumn 1992 focused almost exclusively on their development.<sup>475</sup> For the most part, subordinate officials followed his line, insisting that informal communities would not be displaced.<sup>476</sup> For example, the local-government minister, Mahmud Sharif, rejected large-scale clearance options as expensive and inhumane—arguing that the *‘ashwa’iyyat* should be treated as a development matter, rather than a security or planning issue.<sup>477</sup> A physician by training, he

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<sup>471</sup> Elyachar (2003): 593.

<sup>472</sup> Sims (2003): 7, 20.

<sup>473</sup> Elyachar (2003): 594; Tekçe et al. (1994): 47-51; concerning subsidized provision, see Taher (1986): 46.

<sup>474</sup> Zaghloul (1994): 7 [*emphasis in the original*].

<sup>475</sup> Al-Sawi (1996): 80-2.

<sup>476</sup> Kuppinger (2001): 202.

<sup>477</sup> Al-Sawi (1996): 105.

insisted that if such areas were ‘cancerous’, then the treatment should be selective and precise.<sup>478</sup>

Hence the Mubarak government’s primary response to the earthquake and siege of Munira Gharbiyya has been an apparent commitment to upgrading, by means of such instruments as the Fund for the Upgrading of Scattered Settlements announced in early 1993.<sup>479</sup> In Cairo, 68 areas were scheduled for servicing—far out-weighting the fifteen to be demolished.<sup>480</sup> Such infrastructure provision was justified, ironically, on the grounds that the areas were not actually that *‘ashwa’i* and were hence suitable for upgrading.<sup>481</sup> As already noted (2.5.2C), even areas originally slated for demolition were subsequently authorized for servicing.

Yet such acceptance may not really be new. For example, a local-government minister was quoted in the late 1980s as saying of informal communities: “in the end [...] we are obligated to license them,”<sup>482</sup> a claim supported in a consultancy study from earlier in the decade:

Periodic rulings from the governorates and/or the National Assembly declaring all informal dwellings to be formal confirms their presumption that they will not be punished or removed because they have not registered their land or obtained a building permit.<sup>483</sup>

The literature further indicates that such declarations were made in 1956, 1966, 1981 and 1984.<sup>484</sup> Also in the 1980s, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, the World Bank and US Agency for International Development (AID) undertook urban-development projects which included the regularization of encroachment communities. On a more everyday level, one Egyptian observer has further noted that local-level licensing—such that particular buildings are allowed utility connections—takes place prior to elections.<sup>485</sup>

## B. MORE APPARENT THAN REAL

Moreover, the actual degree of legalization, regularization and Egyptian-funded upgrading is difficult to assess. A study done in the latter half of the 1990s noted that the bulk of the informal-sector residents lacked clear title to their land or

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<sup>478</sup> Interview, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, Director, Ibn Khadoun Centre for Development Studies, Cairo, 16 March 1997.

<sup>479</sup> GTZ (1995): 2; Sims (2003): 20.

<sup>480</sup> IDSC (n.d.) vol. 3: 2, 4-5.

<sup>481</sup> For example, see NCSCR (1998): 18-20 [*Sec. 3*].

<sup>482</sup> Harik (1997): 174.

<sup>483</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 42.

<sup>484</sup> Arandel & El-Batran (1997): 20-1; Steinberg (1990): 117.

<sup>485</sup> CDC (1995) “Boulaq Dakroul Pre-Mission Report: Urban Physical Profile,” consultancy paper for GTZ (November): 7.

buildings, suggesting that little legalization or regularization had actually taken place.<sup>486</sup> Beyond the provision of security infrastructure,<sup>487</sup> it is unclear what upgrading activities the Mubarak government has itself undertaken since 1992. The scattered-settlement fund's capitalization of \$563 million was quite limited in *per capita* terms, and much of the money may have been spent on projects of primary benefit to upper-income groups in Cairo's more formal areas.<sup>488</sup>

The ambiguity of the upgrading efforts is evident in the case of Munira Gharbiyya, which was described in the semi-official press as a "model" for how the state should deal with the *'ashwa'iyyat*.<sup>489</sup> To begin with, the upgrading was clearly a show-piece project—Britain's Prince Charles subsequently visited the neighbourhood—receiving more funding than any other part of north Giza.<sup>490</sup> Although the precise valuation varied, some \$90 million<sup>491</sup> paid for sewerage and water connections; street lighting and paving; improved sanitation; secondary services such as schools, a youth centre and clinics; as well as a market and the construction of the largest mosque in Giza.<sup>492</sup>

This upgrading led to repeated claims in the semi-official press that Munira Gharbiyya had become a "civilized area"<sup>493</sup> and, as already noted, established Governor Shehata as the man who cleaned up the *'ashwa'iyyat*.<sup>494</sup> Yet a number of factors suggest that state efforts were less impressive than they appeared. For example, the Munira project was—according to the governorate's planning chief—the only such effort undertaken in urban Giza.<sup>495</sup> Yet according to a well-informed source, the water and wastewater side upgrading—accounting for 87 percent of the project's spending<sup>496</sup>—was carried by the national water and wastewater agency, *not* the Giza governorate.<sup>497</sup> Finally, the north Giza area had already received considerable sewerage provision as the result of AID's \$700 million provision of sewerage in Giza (see 6.2.1 & 6.2.3).<sup>498</sup> Hence the sewerage of Munira Gharbiyya—

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<sup>486</sup> De Soto (1997): 7; Sims (2000): 41.

<sup>487</sup> Arandel & El-Batran (1997); al-Sawi (1996): 110; Sulayman (1997): 25.

<sup>488</sup> Sims (2003): 20.

<sup>489</sup> 'Adil al-Dib (1995) "Charles in the New Imbaba!" (in Arabic) *al-Ahram* (12 March 1995).

<sup>490</sup> Mariz Tadros (1996b) "Dump to Model District," *al-Ahram Weekly* (24-30 October): 12; see also, Tahani Ibrahim (1995).

<sup>491</sup> Tadros (1996b): 12; for somewhat larger estimates, see Tahani Ibrahim (1995).

<sup>492</sup> Al-Dib (1995); Tahani Ibrahim (1995); Tadros (1996b): 12.

<sup>493</sup> Al-Dib (1995); Tahani Ibrahim (1995).

<sup>494</sup> Negus (1997): 12; see also, Tadros (1996b): 12.

<sup>495</sup> Interview, Haysam El-Behairi, Head of Physical Planning Department, Giza Governorate, Cairo, 30 May 1998.

<sup>496</sup> Tadros (1996b): 12.

<sup>497</sup> Interview, David Sims, Cairo, 1 April 1997.

<sup>498</sup> A point acknowledged in some Egyptian reportage, for example Tahani Ibrahim (1995).

whether carried out by the governorate or the national agency—would not have been possible without the earlier American investment.

Closer to home, the Munira Gharbiyya upgrading faced accusations from Egyptian commentators that—apart from paving and wastewater—the state concern was “superficial” and the upgrading “nominal.”<sup>499</sup> Claims were made in the opposition press and elsewhere, that the street paving had been confined to main roads;<sup>500</sup> that the new street lights lacked bulbs;<sup>501</sup> and that the area continued to suffer from poor sanitation, service deprivations and lawlessness.<sup>502</sup> This commentary further pointed to the persistence of squatter-pocket communities and claimed that the *‘ashwa’iyyat* continued to proliferate.<sup>503</sup> While such accusations are almost entirely anecdotal, a journalist writing in the semi-official *al-Ahram Weekly* convincingly noted the rather limited geographical scope of the upgrading.<sup>504</sup> While Munira Gharbiyya had received both basic infrastructure and more advanced servicing, nearby informal areas still lacked basic utilities.<sup>505</sup>

While Egyptian officials sometimes cite the provision of water and wastewater service to major informal neighbourhoods such as Bulaq al-Dakrur, a substantial part of this upgrading was also American-funded (see 6.2.3).<sup>506</sup> Moreover, such donor-backed infrastructure provision may not be sustainable. In the late 1990s, the head of GOPP privately opined to a group of western visitors that informal Cairo was no longer an issue because of such servicing. Yet the *dénouement* of American-funded sewerage provision, which had ended shortly beforehand, suggests that the metropolitan wastewater network can neither accommodate Cairo’s further growth nor continue to function in the long-term without a combination of Egyptian-government policy reform and further external investment (see 6.3.2). In short, donor-funded upgrading is *not* a simple solution to urban informality.

### C. DISTRIBUTIVE CONTESTATION?

So rather than seeing the Mubarak government as having made a blanket decision to service informal Cairo in the 1990s, infrastructure provision is more usefully understood as a contested process, predating the *‘ashwa’iyyat* discourse. Although the state’s “duty” to provide “basic services” parallels its nominal social-contract

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<sup>499</sup> Al-Sawi (1996): 129; see also Salah (1995).

<sup>500</sup> Khalid Idris (1995) “The Republic of Imbaba Two Years After Its Liberation” (in Arabic) *al-Wafd* (20 February 1995); al-Sawi (1996): 112.

<sup>501</sup> Idris (1995).

<sup>502</sup> Idris (1995); Nayfin Sa‘d (1995) “Neglect and sewage floods threaten the inhabitants with diseases” (in Arabic) *al-Haya al-Misriyya* (16 July); al-Sawi (1996): 128-9.

<sup>503</sup> Sa‘d (1995); Salah (1995); see also al-Sawi (1996): 129.

<sup>504</sup> Tadros (1996b): 12.

<sup>505</sup> Tadros (1996b): 12.

<sup>506</sup> Yousry (1995): 3, 5.

obligation to provide shelter,<sup>507</sup> successive governments have similarly lacked the needed funds.<sup>508</sup> This capacity shortfall is probably part of the cause of the reluctance to approve new sub-divisions. Hence the state-society relationship might be most usefully understood in terms of the ways in which officials and agencies seek to resist bottom-up demands for servicing—likely framed in social-contract terms<sup>509</sup>—without appearing to defy such expectations completely.

To this end, they have sought justifications for service denial, for example that communities built without planning permission are not entitled to infrastructure connections (2.5.2B). The underlying logic of such proscriptions is suggested in the comments of the local-government official quoted at the beginning of the section. It was also recognized in a consultancy study from the early 1980s, which noted lower-levels of infrastructure connections even in formal-sector buildings, if they were located in informal neighbourhoods. The study's authors hence concluded that "classifying an areas as informal and thus not deserving of infrastructure lines may simply be a convenient rationale for rationing scarce infrastructure resources."<sup>510</sup> This claim is further supported by the cases of failed donor attempts, in the 1980s, to regularize Manshiet Nasser and informal settlements in Helwan (see 4.2.2B & 4.3.1B). One reason for the Cairo governorate's reluctance to title these areas was apparently the concern that it would enable their inhabitants to demand additional servicing.<sup>511</sup> Indeed, the *real* definition of informality in Cairo is probably that of infrastructure access: "a great deal of construction by and for the middle and upper classes has proceeded equally outside the building laws, but usually with more success at locating on land serviced by infrastructure."<sup>512</sup>

Hence despite the Mubarak government's declared commitment to *'ashwa'iyat* upgrading, state officials continued to rebuff bottom-up demands through the 1990s—especially for services such as wastewater which could not be provided on a commercial basis.<sup>513</sup> For their part, the residents of informal communities have historically used a variety of techniques to secure servicing. More public strategies include lodging complaints,<sup>514</sup> writing to the newspapers,<sup>515</sup> staging

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<sup>507</sup> Taher (1986): 46.

<sup>508</sup> Serageldin (1990): 40.

<sup>509</sup> Mohieddin (1994): 17.

<sup>510</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): xviii.

<sup>511</sup> Sawsan El-Messiri (1989a) "Regularization of Land Title for Informal Communities in Cairo: An Analysis and Proposed Approach," report prepared under a grant made to the Cooperative Housing Foundation by USAID/Cairo: 1; see also, Mayo et al. (1982): 61.

<sup>512</sup> Tekçe et al. (1994): 11.

<sup>513</sup> Bakr (1993): 62; Personal communication, Mariz Tadros, journalist, *al-Ahram Weekly*, January 2000.

<sup>514</sup> Taher (1986): 48.

<sup>515</sup> For example, the letters to the editor section of *al-Ahram* during 1982 and 1983, always featured such complaints.



demonstrations<sup>516</sup> and lawsuits. This last tactic was used successfully by homesteaders on the Fustat plateau in the face of efforts by the plateau's land-development company to deny them access to water and electricity.<sup>517</sup>

Most discussions of the issue further note that communities "lobby" or otherwise exert political pressure through local-government councils.<sup>518</sup> Governors and other state officials are sometimes approached directly by individuals and communities seeking access to services.<sup>519</sup> Less visibly, communities may access contacts in the bureaucracy:

[there is a] long tradition of communities reaching into and mobilizing one or another government institution on their behalf. [...] they do have connections and networks through relatives and friends located at different levels of the vast bureaucracy. Often some help is obtained, and occasionally it is substantial, depending upon political bargaining factors.<sup>520</sup>

In some cases, the networking or patronage mechanism may be even less direct. Areas are said to be able to gain access to utilities provided an "important person" lives there.<sup>521</sup> Households may even simply resort to bribing local government employees or councillors.<sup>522</sup> Not surprisingly, servicing is hence bound up in clientelist electoral mechanisms discussed previously (2.4.4C). Ruling party candidates campaigning in informal neighbourhoods may promise services such as electricity and distribute goods such as drinking water.<sup>523</sup> Such clientelist political logic may obstruct donor efforts to service informal areas according to more universalistic criteria (see 6.4.2).

## 2.6 THE POLITICS OF NEGLECT

Although the successive Egyptian governments since 1952 have indisputably maintained top-down control over Cairo, their ability to govern the city is far more circumscribed. Indeed, the autocratic dispensation in which they have been embedded and its concomitant logic of neglectful rule, are key to understanding

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<sup>516</sup> Bell (forthcoming).

<sup>517</sup> Deboulet (1994): 499-506.

<sup>518</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 31, 60; Sakr (1990): 101; Sims (2002): 95-6; (2000): 20.

<sup>519</sup> Elyachar (2003): 593; Kassem (1999): 129; Mariz Tadros (1996a) "Sewage Siege," *al-Ahram Weekly*, No. 276 (6-12 June 1996): 14; Taher (1986): 52.

<sup>520</sup> Tekçe et al. (1994): 34.

<sup>521</sup> Deia<sup>c</sup> Abd al-Hamid et al. (1992) "The State of Imbaba: Life Without Terrorism" (in Arabic) *Akhir Sa'a*, No. 3035 (23 December):11; see also, Montasser Kamal (2001) "Exclusive Governance and Urban Development in Egypt" in Seteney Shami ed., *Capital Cities: Ethnographies of Urban Governance in the Middle East*. Centre for Urban & Community Studies, University of Toronto: 54; Sims (2002): 96; Taher (1986): 49.

<sup>522</sup> Abd al-Hamid et al. (1992): 51; Taher (1986): 48-50.

<sup>523</sup> Fahmy (2004): 606-7; Sulayman (1997): 26.

the infrastructural shortcomings of Egyptian state—as *constitutive* of informal Cairo.

### 2.6.1 STATE-SOCIETY DISENGAGEMENT

To begin with, informal urbanization suggests the state's lack of penetrative capacity in a number of respects. Despite the numbers of police guarding the capital, few could apparently be spared to enforce land and building regulations—suggesting a preoccupation with public order outweighing the concern for societal regulation. The appearance of modernist urbanism notwithstanding, the subsidization of housing and service provision indicates the state's lack of extractive capacity. By the 1970s, the informal housing sector's size probably precluded a top-down approach to it, hence the Sadat and Mubarak governments pursued desert-orientated urban-development strategies that essentially ignored the existing agglomeration (see 5.1.1C). Both they and Nasser, however, have ruled indirectly by means of urban notables and devolved patronage.

### 2.6.2 PATRIMONIALISM & CLIENTELISM

As this last point suggests, the politics of persons and their privileged access has also played a crucial role in Cairo's state-society relations. For example, the social exclusion characteristic of authoritarianism—in which the material benefits of power are similarly concentrated—is an important condition of possibility for informal urbanization. Not only have political elites and important constituencies tended to monopolize formal urbanism and precluded policy-making for the city as a whole, the tacit official tolerance of informal housing may be understood as a means of deflecting bottom-up demands for inclusion. More specifically, the pervasive corruption and incompetence characteristic of the clientelized bureaucracy helps explain both the genesis of such communities and their ability to avoid removal. Finally, the 'clientelization of society'—a key element in the durability of the post-1952 dispensation—structures the supply and demand for infrastructure in the grass-roots.

### 2.6.3 RISK AVOIDANCE

The Egyptian state's neglectful rule of informal Cairo has been substantially shaped by a reluctance to intervene in it. While the absence of demolitions may ultimately reflect the logistical constraints entailed in state-society disengagement—and resource limitations more generally—they are more immediately the result of the security risks entailed in clearances. In the absence of sufficient quantities of alternative shelter, state agencies have generally sought to ignore areas they could otherwise do little about.

#### 2.6.4 THE SPATIALIZATION OF AUTOCRACY

These elements of neglectful rule reappear empirically throughout the remaining chapters, and will again be reviewed in the conclusion. Already however, they suggest the crucial point that informal Cairo should not be seen as a lawless 'Other' outside of the state; all the evidence suggests its practical socio-political integration. Moreover, its conditions of possibility and reproduction are clearly linked to inappropriate land-use controls, incompetent and corrupt regulation, the parochial concerns of state agencies and the political elite's top-down indifference to the *sha'b*. For all these reasons, informal Cairo can be seen as 'diagnostic'—rather than antagonistic as implied in the social pathology and popular-agency approaches—of the post-1952 order. Indeed, its political significance may lie in the way that it 'spatializes' otherwise subterranean elements in the dispensation of power.

# PART B

## DONOR INTERVENTIONS IN CAIRO, 1974-1998

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## CHAPTER 3

### INTRODUCTION TO PART B: THE POLITICS OF AID

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Having initially examined the Egyptian state's neglectful rule in Cairo, the thesis will now broaden its focus—taking up the impact of internationally backed urban-development projects on state-society relations in the city. As already discussed (1.6), external financial backing and political support have played an important role in sustaining the post-1952 order. From the 1970s through the 1990s, Egyptian governments generally received between \$1.5-2.5 billion in aid and credits per annum.<sup>1</sup> In the 1980s, external income financed about 80 percent of public investment, strongly suggesting the state's dependence on donor funding for urban development.<sup>2</sup>

While most western donors have recognized the political context in which they worked, few have been resigned to it. Most aid programmes, whether bilateral or multilateral, have sought to reform the Egyptian state's management of economy and society. The projects considered in the following chapters were intended to foster an administratively competent state better capable of managing the city's future growth. That they were generally unsuccessful, is the basis for the final problematic considered in this thesis.

*Why were western donors unable to increase the Egyptian state's governance capacities vis-à-vis informal Cairo?*

The answer, in brief, lies in the resilience of neglectful rule and its importance to the reproduction of the post-1952 order. Such state-society relations of indifference are not merely crucial to understanding informal Cairo's conditions of possibility, they also help explain its durability. Successful or not, such aid projects are analytically significant insofar as they help illustrate the implications of neglectful rule for state capacity—as distinct from the Egyptian state's more structural weaknesses.

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<sup>1</sup> For the 1970s and 1980s, see Handoussa (1991): 208; for the 1990s, see Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2003) *Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows*. Development Assistance Committee: 136.

<sup>2</sup> Weinbaum (1986): 49.

This short chapter on the politics of development assistance presents the broad context underpinning the subsequent case-study chapters. It begins with the point just made, looking at aid as diagnostic of the linkage between authoritarianism and neglectful rule (3.1). Next is a section on donor efforts to foster an administratively competent state, setting out a framework for making sense of their interventions in the subsequent chapters and also suggesting implicitly why Egyptian state agencies have resisted their policy reforms (3.2). The chapter's scope then narrows to a focus on Cairo's relationship with the United States, its principal backer, and whose development interventions can be found throughout the subsequent chapters (3.3). While Washington made considerable efforts to improve the Egyptian state's governance, the practical exigencies and underlying logic of the aid relationship ironically undercut them. As this discussion suggests, however, the problematics of the aid relationship were not purely on the Egyptian side. The chapter's final section takes up factors complicating the use of aid case studies as tools of political analysis and potential objections to the approach (3.4).

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### 3.1 AID AS DIAGNOSTIC

The earlier discussion of the linkages between state capacity and regime type (1.3) neglected to mention an important caveat: some scholars question their existence,<sup>3</sup> suggesting that a country's developmental prospects may have more to do with exogenous structural factors, socio-economic and historical, than its internal political dispensation.<sup>4</sup>

At the very least, the contemporary Egyptian state's deficiencies have sometimes been overdetermined, with the long-term structural constraints of underdevelopment also playing a considerable role. Egypt's history of having an essentially agrarian economy—integrated internationally through cotton exports—also created structural barriers to top-down modernization, and hence limited the domestic resources available for state-building.<sup>5</sup> So at least through the first half of the 1970s, the Egyptian state's developmental shortcomings cannot simply be blamed on the authoritarian regime type and its attendant state-society pathologies.<sup>6</sup> While the use of the state as an instrument of self-aggrandisement and

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<sup>3</sup> José Antonio Cheibub (1998) "Political Regimes and the Extractive Capacity of Governments: Taxation in Democracies and Dictatorships," *World Politics*, 50, 3 (April): 349-50.

<sup>4</sup> Karen L. Remmer (1985-86) "Exclusionary Democracy," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 20, 4 (Winter): 64 [see also the works cited therein].

<sup>5</sup> Barnett (1992): 58-64; see also, Charles Issawi (1961) "Egypt Since 1800: A Study in Lop-sided Development," *Journal of Economic History*, 21, 1 (March): 1-25; Waterbury (1983): 41-53.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond Hinnebusch (2003) "Conclusion" in M. Riad El-Ghonemy ed., *Egypt in the Twenty-First Century: Challenges for Development*. RoutledgeCurzon: 219.

clientelism clearly impeded state building, there is little evidence that a more mobilizational development strategy would have been possible or yielded better results.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Egypt's development in this period was also negatively affected by such similarly exogenous factors as the 1967 war, the 1962-67 intervention in Yemen and the failure of the 1961 cotton crop.<sup>8</sup>

Some of these constraints, however, began to ease in the mid-1970s with the gradual de-escalation of the confrontation with Israel and the increased availability of external income. In so doing, they make the neglectful rule of the Sadat and Mubarak governments more visible. State-society disengagement and risk avoidance become more obviously exigencies of the political order, as opposed to simply reflections of structural constraints.<sup>9</sup> More specifically in this context, the urban-development initiatives examined in the subsequent chapters suggest that the state's negligent governance of Cairo has not been purely the result of insufficient resources. Had they been more successful, donor-backed projects could have increased the Mubarak government's capacity to administer the city and hence its discretion to demolish or upgrade informal settlements. Thus the continuing constraints on state infrastructural capacity *vis-à-vis* informal Cairo may be understood, at least in part, as a result of neglectful authoritarianism.

### 3.2 DEVELOPING STATE CAPACITY

Development projects are a particularly suitable means to study the constraining effects of regime type on state capacity, as donors such as the World Bank and AID have pursued projects with Egyptian state agencies aimed at fostering an administratively competent state.<sup>10</sup> While this objective has received less attention than their related efforts to encourage Egypt's transition to a market economy, such an increase in the state's capacity to govern Egyptian society is probably a precondition for any genuine economic opening (see 1.5).

As far as the donors were concerned, urban-development projects in Cairo were rarely confined to the installation of infrastructure or the provision of services. Rather, these initiatives have often incorporated policy-reform and institutional-development components with the aim of improving the state's governance of its capital. To this end, they have also sometimes been presented as 'pilot' or 'demonstration' projects' which—if successful—might be replicated with further infusions of external assistance. Such success would illustrate the viability of donor-

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<sup>7</sup> Harik (1997): 201; Issawi (1961): 23-4; Waterbury (1985): 65.

<sup>8</sup> Waterbury 1983: 93-100.

<sup>9</sup> For efforts to distinguish between structural and more political factors, see Ikram (1980): 256-7; Alan Richards (1980) "Egypt's Agriculture in Trouble," *MERIP Reports*, No. 80 (January): 10.

<sup>10</sup> Denis J. Sullivan (1991) "Bureaucratic Politics in Development Assistance: The Failure of American Aid in Egypt," *Administration & Society*, 23, 1: 39-40; Weinbaum (1986): 72-3, 83-8.

backed reform for the city's governance, which would then ideally be institutionalized in subsequent phases of replication.

### 3.2.1 COST RECOVERY

The most basic goal has been reform of the Egyptian state's highly subsidised provision of housing and utilities. Noting their inequitable distribution, donors have argued that Egyptian governments lacked the funds to provide them in sufficient quantities to meet the needs of steadily increasing urban populations. Greater cost recovery from beneficiaries, they claimed, was needed to reduce the level of subsidy and thus increase the extent and equity of provision. Donors were not necessarily opposed to subsidies *per se*, but instead urged that they be transparent and explicitly aimed at lower-income groups.<sup>11</sup>

Cost-recovery measures discussed in the subsequent chapters include higher charges for state-supplied housing and increased utility tariffs. In their attempts at upgrading in Manshiet Nasser and Helwan, the World Bank and AID also sought to have the Egyptian state recoup its servicing costs by selling homesteaders in encroachment communities title to the public land they occupied. Donors further sought to reduce subsidy levels, in their various projects, through increasing the affordability of upgrading and housing to low-income beneficiaries.

One means of achieving this objective was reduced construction standards. While Egyptian government agencies usually claimed to have uniform standards for housing and infrastructure, the Bank and AID have argued that these requirements should be scaled to the income of beneficiaries so as to increase their unsubsidized accessibility.<sup>12</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, the donors also experimented with various kinds of owner-built housing, limiting their involvement to the preparation of serviced sites, the supply of components and the provision of mortgage financing. Sometimes called "aided self-help," these projects were seen as a means of maximising the impact of limited government resources for the provision of housing and assisting low income groups whose provision with housing and services would otherwise require substantial subsidies.<sup>13</sup>

Cost recovery was also usually coupled with a degree of fiscal decentralization. In their initial efforts to upgrade informal communities, the World Bank and AID attempted to set in motion a self-sustaining process whereby the recovery of capital costs from upgrading beneficiaries would, in part, finance subsequent phases of upgrading—independent of the Egyptian state's centralized budgetary process. Later cost-recovery plans tended to be more modest, with donors seeking to build

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<sup>11</sup> Joint Housing Team (1976): 37.

<sup>12</sup> World Bank (1986): 24.

<sup>13</sup> John D. Gerhart (1983) "The Case for Sites and Services Schemes" in Richard Lobban ed., *Urban Research Strategies for Egypt, Cairo Papers in Social Science* 6, 2 (June): 36; Joint Housing Team (1976): 64.



revenue streams into their utility projects so as to fund follow-on operations and maintenance (O&M) costs—again independent of the central state.

### 3.2.2 INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

The importance of financial decentralization indicates that the first objective of cost recovery necessarily entailed a second goal of institutional transformation. Particularly with respect to urban planning issues, donors were well aware that any attempt to improve the city's governance required reforming the rule of autonomous governorates and national ministries (2.5). They have hence periodically urged the creation of centralized agencies capable of overcoming the bureaucratic fragmentation and inertia characteristic of neglectful rule.

### 3.2.3 SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

Cost recovery, moreover, was not an entirely top-down process. It implicitly necessitated a third objective of social mobilization. No longer the passive recipients of infrequent state largesse, the beneficiaries of donor interventions would need to play a more active role in the formal provision of housing and services. Most basically, the World Bank and AID sought to use housing finance and titling to mobilize beneficiary savings to pay for housing and services.

'Aided self-help' projects—which sought to exploit the self-reliance and problem-solving capacities of low-income homesteaders—were even more explicitly mobilizational. For example, donors expected that their investments in services and titling programmes would encourage beneficiaries to make greater housing investments as their quality of life improved and they gained a larger stake in their communities.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to modernist perceptions of the informal as disorderly, donors sometimes promoted a 'semi-formal' type of urbanism combining the "inherent energy"<sup>15</sup> ostensibly present in informal communities with a modicum of top-down planning and servicing. Owner-built housing, for example, would allow plot buyers considerable flexibility to improve "house structure as savings and materials become available," but avoid the service deprivations and spatial pathologies characteristic of truly informal areas.<sup>16</sup> Over time, such intermediate communities would slow the growth of informal urbanism by becoming an alternative to it.

'Participatory development'—in which beneficiaries are ostensibly involved in all aspects of an intervention from start to finish—has framed several western-financed urban-development interventions in Cairo since the 1990s, and is the final type of mobilization discussed here. Most narrowly, 'participation' can be understood, much like aided self-help, as an instrumental means of resource

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<sup>14</sup> Joint Housing Team (1976): 66.

<sup>15</sup> Tekçe et al. (1994) p. 41 see also Joint Housing & Community Upgrading Team (1977): 51.

<sup>16</sup> Joint Housing Team (1976): 71.

extraction from beneficiaries.<sup>17</sup> More ambitiously, however, it is sometimes described in quasi-political terms as a “self-generating activity” leading beneficiaries to “seek participation in other spheres of life.”<sup>18</sup> This notion of “capacity building”<sup>19</sup> for grass-roots empowerment has proven attractive for donors with a larger agenda of “collective action and consensus building” for the urban poor.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.3 THE US-EGYPTIAN AID RELATIONSHIP

Were state capacity purely a matter of spending, then US assistance to the Sadat and Mubarak governments would have likely fostered a very competent state. Between 1975-2002, Washington provided about \$28 billion in military aid and approximately \$26 billion in economic assistance.<sup>21</sup> Much of this latter aid came from the Economic Support Fund (ESF) programme, allocated to countries “important to U.S. security and political interests.”<sup>22</sup> By the mid 1990s, US economic aid represented half of all such assistance received by Egypt since the late 1970s.<sup>23</sup> Such transfers, moreover, make Cairo the second largest recipient of US aid after Israel. By 1996, Egypt consumed 40 percent of Washington’s annual military aid budget and 34 percent of ESF funds.<sup>24</sup>

Although its impact on Egypt’s actual power-projection capabilities has been mixed,<sup>25</sup> US aid has facilitated the officer corps’ construction of the state-within-the-

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<sup>17</sup> Caroline O. Moser (1989) “Community Participation in Urban Projects in the Third World,” *Progress in Planning*, 32: 81-2

<sup>18</sup> Habitat (1984) “Community Participation in the Execution of Low-Income Housing Projects,” report No. HS/OP/83/16E: 6.

<sup>19</sup> Moser (1989): 83.

<sup>20</sup> Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (1997) “Community Participation in Urban Development in the ESCWA Region,” United Nations: 3.

<sup>21</sup> For military assistance, see Clyde R. Mark (2005) “Egypt-United States Relations,” CRS Issue Brief for Congress, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress (updated 13 April): 13 [Table 2]; this calculation treats military credits as grant aid because Washington forgave much of this debt in 1990, see Weiss & Wurzel (1998): 44; totals for economic assistance are derived, from AID (2005) “About USAID Egypt,” <http://www.usaid-eg.org/detail.asp?id=5>, 11 January 2005.

<sup>22</sup> GAO [US General Accounting Office] (1985) “The U.S. Economic Assistance Program for Egypt Poses a Management Challenge for AID,” report to the Administrator, Agency for International Development, GAO/NSIAD-85-109 (31 July): 1.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph Lieberman et al. (1994) “Capital Projects: Egypt Case Study,” AID Evaluation Technical Report No. 20, Center for Development Information and Evaluation, US Agency for International Development (February): 15.

<sup>24</sup> Phebe Marr (1999) “Prologue” in Phebe Marr ed., *Egypt at the Crossroads: Domestic Stability and Regional Role*. National Defense University Press: xix.

<sup>25</sup> Steven A. Cook (2000) “Egypt - Still America’s Partner?,” *Middle East Quarterly* (June), <http://www.meforum.org/article/58>, 3 May 2005: ‘Box: Does Egypt Threaten Israel Militarily?’.

state,<sup>26</sup> and indirectly funded its patronage networks.<sup>27</sup> The impact of economic assistance, however, is more complicated. Unlike economic aid to Israel, it has not been fully fungible.<sup>28</sup> Direct cash transfers are the smallest part of the programme, totalling approximately \$4 billion or just under 15 percent of the 1975-2002 total.<sup>29</sup> About \$11 billion, or 43 percent of the total, has consisted of US-funded commodity imports and the subsidized sale of wheat and flour. The latter accounted for a substantial proportion of Egyptian food consumption in the 1980s, hence sustaining government subsidies.<sup>30</sup> The final \$11 billion component of the aid relationship, again about 43 percent of the total, represents project assistance which will be discussed below and in subsequent chapters.

### 3.3.1 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Despite periods of diplomatic cooling as well as congressional concerns about Egyptian economic performance and political behaviour more generally,<sup>31</sup> reductions in aid levels have been relatively small and gradual.<sup>32</sup> The durability of the aid relationship reflects, at least partially, US perceptions that it had become obligated to back Egypt as a consequence of Sadat's signature on the Camp David accords normalizing relations with Israel.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Washington's principal objective has been supporting—some might say 'clientelizing'<sup>34</sup>—Egyptian governments both in the service of peace with Israel and as one of Washington's principal allies in the Middle East.<sup>35</sup> To these ends, Cairo has received more aid than could be justified economically.<sup>36</sup> Egypt's domestic development has seemed almost a secondary consideration.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> For examples related to the development of the parallel military economy, see Henry & Springborg (2001): 151; Springborg (1989): 110-11.

<sup>27</sup> Cassandra (1995): 22-3.

<sup>28</sup> Weinbaum (1986): 165.

<sup>29</sup> This breakdown of US economic assistance is derived from AID (2005).

<sup>30</sup> Sadowski (1991): 18; Weinbaum (1986): 140.

<sup>31</sup> Concerning the Washington-Cairo political relationship, see Hermann Fredrick Eilts (1988) "The United States and Egypt" in William B. Quandt ed, *The Middle East: Ten Years After Camp David*. Brookings Institution: esp. 117-36; William B. Quandt (1990) *The United States & Egypt*. Brookings Institution: esp. 16-39; with respect to congressional concerns, see Mark (2005): 3, 9; Robert F. Zimmerman (1993) *Dollars, Diplomacy, and Dependency: Dilemmas of U.S. Economic Aid*. Lynne Rienner: 87-8.

<sup>32</sup> Mark (2005): 9.

<sup>33</sup> Quandt (1990): 43.

<sup>34</sup> Eilts (1988): 147.

<sup>35</sup> Raymond Hinnebusch (2002) "The Foreign Policy of Egypt" in Raymond Hinnebusch & Anoushiravan Ehteshami eds., *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*. Lynne Rienner: 108-9.

<sup>36</sup> GAO (1985): 7; see also, Quandt (1990): 43.

<sup>37</sup> The quasi-academic accounts of former US officials—for example, Eilts (1988); Quandt (1990); Zimmerman (1993): 82-4—strongly suggest that their focus was on the political, rather than the developmental, aspect of the US-Egypt relationship.

### 3.3.2 CONFLICTING OBJECTIVES & MIXED RESULTS

Nonetheless, successive US administrations have been unwilling or unable to provide the bulk of economic aid as a direct cash grant. While this option continues to have advocates,<sup>38</sup> it was rejected early in the aid relationship for fear that the structural inadequacies of the political economy inherited from the Nasser era would prevent the effective use of the money.<sup>39</sup> In the period under consideration, AID has rather followed the two-pronged strategy of using its aid projects to encourage economic liberalization and state building.

#### A. PROBLEMATICS OF DEVELOPMENT & REFORM

But US development interventions faced problems from the outset. Egypt was unable to absorb the resources on offer in the manner expected by AID. Upon its establishment of a Cairo mission in the mid-1970s, the Sadat government gave AID a “shopping list of possible projects” but otherwise “offered very little guidance” as to how they should be undertaken.<sup>40</sup> A former AID consultant based in Egypt at this time commented that Egyptian state agencies had little capability to prepare well-researched project proposals and, given the political context of Washington’s assistance, “they didn’t think they had to.” Indeed, their officials came to resent AID’s efforts to rationalize its spending:

I remember visiting the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction (formed specifically to meet and negotiate with the AID types) in 1977 and being taken to a room—stacked floor to ceiling—with AID consulting reports—on myriad issues. The Egyptians referred to it as the (then) 5th pyramid. The government was growing weary of all of the impossible demands for data, access, cost estimates—and frankly, were ill-equipped to respond to any of these meaningfully.<sup>41</sup>

Despite subsequent decades of programmes and projects, AID has had little success in liberalizing the Egyptian economy<sup>42</sup> in the face of ostensible Egyptian fears that it would provoke bottom-up unrest (1.5.3B).<sup>43</sup> More specifically, implementation of the policy reforms discussed in 3.2—and this applies to urban-development interventions in general and not just those undertaken by AID—has been frustrated by the logic of neglectful rule. While the projects discussed in the subsequent chapters mostly predate the explicit emphasis on governance reform, civil-society promotion and democratization which now characterize the aid policies of many

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<sup>38</sup> For example, see Sullivan (1991): 44-5.

<sup>39</sup> Eilts (1988): 137.

<sup>40</sup> Weinbaum (1986) p. 36.

<sup>41</sup> Personal Communication, Delwin A. Roy, 17 February 2000.

<sup>42</sup> For critiques of the US aid effort, see Denis J. Sullivan (1996) “American Aid to Egypt, 1975-96: Peace Without Development,” *Middle East Policy*, 4, 4 (October): 36-49; Zimmerman (1993): 86-95.

<sup>43</sup> Sullivan (1991): 37.

western donors,<sup>44</sup> they nonetheless had an implicitly political dimension that, in principle, might have threatened the reproduction of the post-1952 *status quo*.<sup>45</sup>

Hence the case studies to be taken up in subsequent chapters manifest a pattern whereby Egyptian agencies or officials would request or accept particular projects—if only to get at the money entailed—and then strive to confound their policy-reform aspects. For example they consistently refused to permit the implementation of cost-recovery measures, reduced construction standards or aided self-help projects which would have increased the state’s extraction of revenue and undermined the existing pattern of clientelist distribution. They similarly frustrated the social-mobilization components of western-backed initiatives, whether these were in the service of cost recovery or other objectives. State agencies further resisted donor efforts to promote institutional reform, going to considerable efforts to block their access to the relevant operational bureaucracies. Donor aspirations notwithstanding, urban development projects in Egypt have thus tended to be top-down infrastructure provision efforts with systemic problems of sustainability and dependent on further infusions of aid.

#### B. POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

In the face of such Egyptian resistance, AID attempted to impose conditionalities—predicating aid disbursements and project implementation on the Egyptian achievement of specific reform targets—beginning in the latter half of the 1980s.<sup>46</sup> But the Mubarak government has equally sought to reject their imposition, ultimately on the grounds that the aid was being provided to sustain peace.<sup>47</sup> The Egyptians have had “sufficient political clout in Washington to fend off those who seek to press it too hard on economic reasons alone.”<sup>48</sup> Hence Washington’s strategic agenda has generally overruled using aid to leverage policy reform. Moreover by providing a cushion against foreign-exchange shortages, western assistance to Egypt—as with other rent streams—can be seen as actually having mitigated the need for reforms, and the politically risky choices they would entail.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Concerning the recent emphasis on democratization, see Imco Brouwer (2000) “US Civil Society Assistance to the Arab World: The Cases of Egypt and Palestine,” EUI Working Papers, RSC No. 2000/5, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies: esp. 16-29; Sheila Carapico (2002) “Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World,” *Middle East Journal*, 56, 3 (Summer): 379-95.

<sup>45</sup> Concerning the importance of institution-building for democratization, see Robert Springborg (2005a) “The Democratization Industry and the Middle East,” Inaugural lecture, School of Oriental and African Studies (24 May): 13-14 [[http://www/imej.soas.ac.uk/docs/Inaugural\\_lecture\\_printversion27April.doc](http://www/imej.soas.ac.uk/docs/Inaugural_lecture_printversion27April.doc), 31 October 2006].

<sup>46</sup> Quandt (1990): 45.

<sup>47</sup> Duncan Clarke (1997) “US Security Assistance to Egypt and Israel,” *Middle East Journal*, 51, 2 (Spring): 204; GAO (1985): 19; Zimmerman (1993): 85-6.

<sup>48</sup> Sullivan (1996): 47.

<sup>49</sup> Richards (1991): 1721; Springborg (1989): 280.

Hence the policy-reform agenda notwithstanding, Washington's aid flows have had the (ironic) effect of propping up the *status quo*, rather than reforming it.<sup>50</sup>

### C. THE EDIFICE COMPLEX REVISITED

Moreover, the strategic context of American assistance has (again ironically) perpetuated the edifice-complex tendency in Egypt's post-1952 development (1.4.6). Elsewhere, the US had begun to de-emphasize capital projects in its aid spending by the 1970s, responding to criticisms that they were often poor value for money and did not significantly improve the economic development of their recipients. Egypt, by contrast, received more and larger capital projects than any other aid beneficiary.<sup>51</sup> Through 2002, these amounted to about \$6 billion, over half of all ESF spending on Egypt.<sup>52</sup> While the country did face significant infrastructural deficits in many sectors, such projects were likely favoured at least in part because of their visibility. They were intended to be a tangible 'peace dividend' for the Egyptian people and demonstration of Washington's commitment to the Sadat government.<sup>53</sup>

In addition, the sheer level of project funding exceeded the capacity of the AID to disburse it and Egypt to absorb it.<sup>54</sup> The resulting "pipeline" of unused funds, around \$2.5 billion in the mid-1980s, reinforced the preference for easily identified construction and infrastructure projects.<sup>55</sup> These were sometimes chosen, according to congressional auditors: "mainly for their ability to absorb large amounts of funds rather than priority toward achieving long term economic growth."<sup>56</sup>

Lastly, Washington's emphasis for money-absorbing infrastructure projects undercut its policy-reform agenda in two ways. First, such projects are ill-suited to the imposition of conditionalities which would necessitate the cancellation of efforts on which substantial amounts had already been spent.<sup>57</sup> More importantly, they reinforced the Egyptian tendency to conflate spending with development. One observer of the US aid effort noted the Egyptian hunger for resources to consume and—official rhetoric notwithstanding—a relative indifference to planning how they might be most efficiently spent:

Where US advisors tend to see problems of implementing projects in terms of administrative determination and skills, their Egyptian counterparts

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Springborg (1993) "Egypt" in Tim Niblock & Emma Murphy eds., *Economic and Political Liberalization in the Middle East*. British Academic Press: 153-4.

<sup>51</sup> Lieberson et al. (1994): 1, 5, 15-16.

<sup>52</sup> AID (2005).

<sup>53</sup> GAO (1985): 16; Zimmerman (1993): 88-9.

<sup>54</sup> Weinbaum (1986): 76.

<sup>55</sup> GAO (1985): 26-8; Weinbaum (1986): 70.

<sup>56</sup> GAO (1985): 8; see also, Zimmerman (1993): 88-9; more generally, see Judith Tandler (1975) *Inside Foreign Aid*. Johns Hopkins University Press: 88-90.

<sup>57</sup> ODA [Overseas Development Administration] (1994) "Cairo Wastewater Project, Egypt: Interim Evaluation," Evaluation Report EV 539, vol. 1: 40 [*Para e*].

seem to feel that most objectives can be realized by getting the United States or other donors to furnish more resources. This notion of development has during much of the history of the program expressed itself in “build us this.”<sup>58</sup>

Quite apart from their opportunity costs, projects undertaken in such a context of institutionalized dependence are difficult to sustain.

### 3.4 THE AMBIGUITIES OF AID & REFORM

Such problems on the donor-side of the aid relationship, moreover, complicate the use of development projects as means of uncovering the Egyptian state’s neglectful rule of its capital. Sceptics may counter that the failure of these efforts says more about the political pathologies of donors, than those of the Egyptians. This section addresses three such objections.

#### 3.4.1 ABSOLVING THE DONORS?

Critics might first assert that explaining less-than-successful project outcomes in terms of Egyptian strategies of neglectful rule represents an exercise in “blaming the victim”—while relieving western donors of responsibility for failed or unsustainable initiatives.<sup>59</sup>

Such criticisms are not without merit. The initiatives discussed in the following three chapters all suffered from numerous problems of conceptualization and execution on the part of donors. Nonetheless, because the thesis is about Egyptian politics rather than international development projects, it focuses primarily on what the projects indicate about the former. In other words, the thesis is less concerned with explaining project failure than understanding its implications for state-society relations in Cairo. Moreover, it is analytically significant that a diverse collection of initiatives—differing with respect to periods, donors, target areas within Cairo and objectives—should face similar problems on the ground. This homogeneity of outcome, despite heterogeneity in every other respect, suggests that their deficiencies were not all internal.

#### 3.4.2 THE EFFICACY OF AID?

Sceptics of the efficacy of international-development assistance might further question the utility of externally funded projects as an indicator for judging the Egyptian state’s urban governance.<sup>60</sup> Insofar as the problems of unsuccessful Cairo

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<sup>58</sup> Weinbaum (1986): 121.

<sup>59</sup> William Ryan (1971) *Blaming the Victim*. Pantheon: esp. 3-29.

<sup>60</sup> For sceptical views, see P.T. Bauer (1984) *Reality and Rhetoric: Studies in the Economics of Development*. Harvard University Press: esp. 38-72; Jorge E. Hardoy & David Satterthwaite (1989) *Squatter Citizen: Life in the Urban Third World*. Earthscan Publications: 306-7.

projects resemble those observed in donor interventions elsewhere in the developing world, then project failure may have very little to say about Egypt in particular.<sup>61</sup> Instead, it would tend to suggest a more general point: externally backed initiatives often fail to achieve sustainable change in target countries.<sup>62</sup>

While this criticism is again not without merit, nonetheless it does not address the specificities of project failure discussed in the case-study chapters. Moreover, project failure as a generalized phenomenon may reflect the presence of similar neglectful-rule pathologies elsewhere in the developing world.<sup>63</sup> Finally, there is evidence that externally funded urban initiatives are not entirely in vain, that donors can successfully intervene in the fields of housing, services and urban poverty reduction—particularly with respect to state capacity building.<sup>64</sup> The absence of such capacity building in Egypt thus remains analytically salient.

### 3.4.3 APOLOGIA FOR NEO-LIBERALISM?

Finally, sceptics of the free-market orientation in western development assistance might question the apparent assumption that the various urban-development initiatives—and their attendant policy reforms—were unproblematically beneficial for Cairo's residents.<sup>65</sup> Such a presumption would seem to underlie the judgement that Egyptian efforts to obstruct reform can be seen, negatively, an expression of neglectful rule.

Such critics have argued, for example, that World Bank and AID upgrading projects in Egypt had multiple agendas.

[They served to] introduce and implement the logic of market forces in segments of the population which were not previously incorporated into these processes. The result is the increasing integration of these groups into the existing social and economic orders, strengthening the capitalist mode of production and its domination.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> For examples of such similarity, see Donald Gardner & Alfred P. Van Huyck (1990) "The Helwan Housing and Community Upgrading Project for Low-Income Egyptians: The Lessons Learned," prepared for Agency for International Development (1 February): 5, 10 [*Executive Summary*], 3-4, 24; Tayler & Green (n.d.): 1; Lieberson et al. (1994): 1.

<sup>62</sup> Hardoy & Satterthwaite (1989): 306.

<sup>63</sup> A point suggested in Gerhart (1983): 37-8.

<sup>64</sup> Hardoy & Satterthwaite (1989): 306-7; see also, Michael Cohen (2001) "Urban assistance and the material world: learning by doing at the World Bank," *Environment & Urbanization*, 13, 1 (April): 37-60; Cedric Pugh (1995) "The Role of the World Bank in Housing" in Brian C. Aldrich & Ranvinder S. Sandhu eds., *Housing and the Urban Poor: Policy & Practice in Developing Countries*. Zed Books: esp. 79-80.

<sup>65</sup> For example, Soheir A. Morsy (1986) "U.S. Aid to Egypt: An Illustration and Account of U.S. Foreign Assistance Policy," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 8, 4 (Fall): 358-89; for more nuanced discussions of these specific and general points, see Weinbaum (1986): 119-34; Waterbury (1985).

<sup>66</sup> Roger Zetter & Mohamed Hamza (1997) "The Impact of Foreign Technical Assistance on Urban Development Projects in Egypt," *Habitat International* 21, 2 (June): 157.



If so, then Egyptian resistance may have been no mere political pathology. It might perhaps have reflected principled opposition to western attempts to roll back Egypt's heritage of nominally 'socialist' governance—for example by privatizing public services and reducing state social-welfare spending—and embed Egypt firmly in the international political economy.<sup>67</sup> Such criticisms might eventually suggest a broader counter-argument to the thesis as a whole: that Cairo's informality and various governance pathologies are less a consequence of an autocratic political order, and more a result of the neo-liberal agenda.<sup>68</sup>

Such objections invite several responses. First, while most donors from the 1970s onward doubtless pursued their Cairo interventions from a market-orientated perspective, few were under any illusions about privatizing the Egyptian state. While by the 1990s some AID officials may have regarded this as a long-term goal, the overriding donor concern for the bulk of the period under study was to reform the state such that it could become capable of governing Cairo's informal and low-income zones.<sup>69</sup> If only because of Egypt's strategic relationship with Washington, it has skirted pressures to embrace neo-liberal policies observed elsewhere in the developing world.<sup>70</sup>

The second point is that donor-backed reform efforts were more focused on cost-recovery than marketization. They sought to extract resources from the beneficiaries of upgrading and servicing projects in informal communities with the aim of, ultimately, reducing the Egyptian state's dependence on external aid.<sup>71</sup> While cost recovery involves complicated issues of ability to pay and socio-economic equity, in principle, donors were not unreasonable in wanting to reduce Egypt's dependence on external assistance.

Perhaps most importantly, donors saw their efforts as broadly compatible with what was already happening on the ground in Cairo.<sup>72</sup> Observers of the informal

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<sup>67</sup> For similar arguments in a more general context, see Morsy (1986): 375-84.

<sup>68</sup> For suggestions of this point, see Timothy Mitchell (1999) "No Factories, No Problems: the Logic of Neo-Liberalism in Egypt," *Review of African Political Economy*, 26 (December): esp. 456-7, 461, 465-6; Haim Yacobi & Relli Shechter (2005) "Rethinking Cities in the Middle East: Political Economy, Planning, and the Lived Space," *The Journal of Architecture*, 10, 5 (November): 510-11; see also Personal communication, Paul Amar, Law and Society Program, University of California, Santa Barbara, 29 July 2004; more generally, see Mike Davis (2004) "Planet of Slums," *New Left Review*, 26-1 (March/April): 5-34.

<sup>69</sup> Lieberson et al. (1994): 67, 69 [Appendix B], 80 [Appendix C]; for indications of the extremely cautious way in which USAID approached wastewater management, see also Ernst & Young (1994) "Wastewater Rate Study and Five Year Financial Plan: Volume 1 - Final Report," Cairo Sewerage II Project Institutional Support Contract, prepared for CH2 Hill/OMI et al., USAID Grant No. 263-0173.01 (26 March): esp. iv, xix-xx; John Folk-Williams et al (1999) "Policy Reform in Egypt's Water and Wastewater Sector," Development Alternatives Inc, prepared for United States Agency for International Development under Contract #HNE-C-00-96-90027-00 (January).

<sup>70</sup> This point is acknowledged quite explicitly by AID and other US officials, for example: Lieberson et al. (1994): 46; GAO (1985): 10, 18-22; Zimmerman (1993): 81-110.

<sup>71</sup> For a more limited argument along these lines, see Pugh (1995): 64.

<sup>72</sup> Joint Housing and Community Upgrading Team (1977): 82.

housing sector have been impressed with the way in which informal urbanization was producing large quantities of surprisingly high quality housing. They argued that, in essence, it was a market-driven process with ample cost-recovery and mobilization of private savings.<sup>73</sup> Thus donors have not seen themselves as imposing market-based models on Egyptian state and society. Rather, they have attempted to integrate an existing (albeit informal) private market with the state's urban interventions—so as to minimize the former's negative externalities and direct it in the service of the latter's ostensible development goals.

In short, the cases under consideration in this thesis do not fit any simple framework of struggles for and against neo-liberal policies.

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<sup>73</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1982a) "The National Urban Policy Study - Final Report," Prepared for the Advisory Committee for Reconstruction, Ministry of Development: 292, 316, 329-30; World Bank (1986): 4-8, 13 [*fn. 21*], 25.

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## CHAPTER 4

### THE POLITICS OF UPGRADING

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In the late 1970s, both the World Bank and AID began projects to upgrade informal areas and assist the Egyptian government in coping with Cairo's ostensible housing shortage. At the risk of implying a clear chronological sequence or donor learning curve, the Bank's Egypt First Urban Development project and AID's much larger Helwan Housing and Community Upgrading project represent first-generation efforts by western aid agencies to address informal Cairo's developmental deficits, and the implications of its growth for the larger city. Although both were intended to be replicable demonstration projects, they were not repeated. Indeed, AID's Helwan efforts ended amidst hostile media commentary and a highly critical report from its inspector general.<sup>1</sup>

But as already suggested (3.4.1), the purpose of this case study is *not* to offer a complete account of what went wrong. Although the short-comings of the donor approaches will soon be glaringly obvious, they are somewhat outside the thesis remit. Similarly, the actual effects of project implementation for beneficiary communities will receive a relatively cursory examination. While obviously salient with respect to the question of project success or failure in general terms, ironically the issue had little direct bearing on programme replication.

The argument being made here, by contrast, is that these two projects were unsuccessful because they challenged the logic of neglectful rule. Such projects, of course, represent resources for the Egyptian state to allocate. They also, however, allow donors to demand that its officials take a more activist and extractive approach to urban management—with a concomitant degree of social mobilization—implicitly threatening the strategies of state-society disengagement, clientelism and risk avoidance characteristic of post-1952 politics. The somewhat tangled history of the two projects outlined here, is best understood in terms of

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<sup>1</sup> William P Barrett (1989) "The Money Pit," *Forbes* (15 May): 100; AID/RIG/A [Office of the Regional Inspector General/Audit] (1988) *Audit of the Helwan Housing and Community Upgrading in Egypt*, Audit Report No 6-263-89-1 (31 October): 3.

state agencies seeking to maximise their access to overseas aid while evading the logic of its provision.

The chapter begins by outlining the background of the projects and their conceptualization (4.1). While earlier accounts have tended to focus on their problems of implementation, the logic of neglectful rule and other project shortcomings were—upon closer scrutiny—evident from their inception. The next two sections will address the unsuccessful implementation process in Manshiet Nasser (4.2) and Helwan (4.3). The final section will offer a preliminary interpretation of the projects with respect to the failure of donor efforts (4.4).

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#### 4.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND & FORMULATION

Substantive international interest in Egypt's urban development can be roughly dated to the early AID and Bank missions to Cairo in 1976 and 1977, shortly after the beginnings of President Sadat's political and economic opening to the West.<sup>2</sup> These missions concluded that Cairo faced serious problems of overcrowding, deficient infrastructure and unplanned growth: "modern ills and the press of too many people soon threatened to overcome an old city."<sup>3</sup> Although they usually preferred technical and quantitative analysis, western observers sometimes spoke in terms of an emergency, for example, recommending that housing provision for low-income groups be undertaken "urgently in order to avoid crisis conditions in overcrowding in the existing housing stock, water supply, sanitation, health conditions etc."<sup>4</sup> A World-Bank consultant who had been charged with studying informal construction practices and building collapse, privately described Cairo of that time as "eight international disasters each waiting to see who happened first."

Mission consultancy studies articulated a clear need for western intervention, arguing that Cairo's systemic problems could only be addressed through reforms in virtually every aspect of the Egyptian state's urban policies. Such conclusions notwithstanding, project preparation was implicitly shaped by the logic of neglectful rule and the political dynamics of the western-Egyptian aid relationship.

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<sup>2</sup> Joint Housing Teams (1977a) "Summary Report: Housing Finance, Urban Land Use Policy, Housing and Community Upgrading for Low-Income Egyptians," Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction, Ministry of Planning with Office of Housing, Agency for International Development (August): [*Preface*]; World Bank (1986): iii.

<sup>3</sup> Malcolm D. MacNair (1989) "Egypt: Profusion of Plans, Poverty of Programs—A Consultant's Experience" in Richard May ed., *The Urbanization Revolution Planning a New Agenda for Human Settlements*. Plenum Press: 154-5; see also Waterbury (1978): 125-98.

<sup>4</sup> Joint Housing Team (1976): 64.

#### 4.1.1 THE EGYPT FIRST URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The World Bank's involvement in Cairo began in early 1976, officially in response to an Egyptian request for "assistance in implementing an urban development project aimed at alleviating the housing problems of the lowest-income families in Egyptian cities."<sup>5</sup> An October 1976 Project Identification mission reported that their proposal was "congruent" with the Bank's sectoral policies.<sup>6</sup> In January 1977, the Egyptians applied for credits to finance the Egypt First Urban Development project, to be a multi-city and multi-component programme:

[...] to provide shelter, employment, and urban services for about 120,000 persons in the lowest income groups at costs they could afford, thus eliminating the need for direct public subsidies and permitting the project to be replicated on a larger scale.<sup>7</sup>

Project preparation, undertaken mainly in cooperation with GOPP, concluded in January 1978.<sup>8</sup> In August of that year, the Bank agreed to lend Egypt \$14 million as part of an overall \$21 million project.

##### A. PROJECT DESIGN

In Cairo, the project's "Shelter Provision" component was to provide "non-subsidized services to existing settlements" containing 18,500 households.<sup>9</sup> These included improvements to the roads, water supply and sewerage network, investments in schools, clinics and community centres and provision for new residential and small business development.<sup>10</sup> Infrastructure standards would be scaled back to facilitate cost recovery, including capital and administrative costs, which was to be made possible—according to special conditions in the credit agreement—by the sale of "freehold property titles" to the upgrading beneficiaries.<sup>11</sup> This regularization was intended to achieve the "full recapture of the initial investment."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> World Bank (1986): 8.

<sup>6</sup> World Bank (1986): 8.

<sup>7</sup> World Bank (1986): v.

<sup>8</sup> World Bank (1985) "Project Completion Report—Egypt: First Urban Development Project," Europe, Middle East, and North Africa Regional Office (28 June) reprinted as part of World Bank (1986) "Project Performance Audit Report": 46.

<sup>9</sup> World Bank (1986): v, 9.

<sup>10</sup> World Bank (1986): 27 [*Annex A*].

<sup>11</sup> World Bank (1986): 10.

<sup>12</sup> Sawsan El-Messiri (1989b) "Recovering Development Costs for Community Upgrading: An Analysis of the Experience in Egypt," report prepared under a grant made to the Cooperative Housing Foundation by USAID/Cairo (December): 6.

As the first step in a larger process, the Bank regarded the project as both offering a chance to initiate a “dialogue”<sup>13</sup> with the Egyptian government on its housing sector policies and as having “the potential for an important ‘demonstration’ effect” in changing them.<sup>14</sup> Cost recovery was to be coupled with a strengthening of state agencies in the housing sector in order to institutionalize the Bank-approved approach to shelter provision. For example, as project development was being completed in April 1978, the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction established a centralized Low Income Housing Development Unit (LIHDU)—to have its own officer in each governorate—in order to “advise and provide technical assistance to the agencies responsible for low-income housing projects on all aspects of project design, construction, operation and maintenance.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the ministry’s Low Income Housing Fund (LIHF)—recently created in 1976—was to serve as the financial intermediary between the Bank and all government agencies charged with project implementation.<sup>16</sup> The LIHF was intended to provide the bureaucratic context for a ‘revolving fund’, whereby recovered costs from upgrading could be used to undertake subsequent iterations of upgrading.<sup>17</sup>

The LIHF had another important function. In keeping with the Bank’s emphasis on mobilising private savings, the Egypt Urban Development Program also included provision for “assistance to self-help upgrading and construction of houses through the provision of building materials loans.”<sup>18</sup> The LIHF was “to provide mortgage financing for the low-income groups under conditions of full cost recovery and reduced levels of interest rate subsidies.”<sup>19</sup>

## B. PREPARATION PROBLEMATICS

The programme’s problems are usually dated to its implementation phase and attributed, by some of those involved, to an absence of shared priorities between the Bank and the Egyptian government.<sup>20</sup> Hoda Sakr, a GOPP planner involved with the World-Bank project in its early stages and who later headed the organization, noted considerable opposition within the state bureaucracy to the objective of informal-areas upgrading and the aided self-help approach.<sup>21</sup> Accounts

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<sup>13</sup> World Bank (1986): 2.

<sup>14</sup> World Bank (1985): 34.

<sup>15</sup> World Bank (1985): 36; see also: 35.

<sup>16</sup> World Bank (1986): 11, 36.

<sup>17</sup> World Bank (1985): 50

<sup>18</sup> World Bank (1986): 27.

<sup>19</sup> World Bank (1986): v.

<sup>20</sup> The closest thing to an official articulation of this position can be found in World Bank (1986): 3; see also Sakr (1990).

<sup>21</sup> Sakr (1990): 6-7, 36.

from the early project missions, moreover, suggest that such Egyptian reservations were evident from the outset.

To begin with, the original Egyptian proposal was apparently *not* for the comprehensive upgrading of informal communities but rather for \$35 million to be spent on the construction of “middle-class housing targeted to civil servants” along with “some upgrading.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover, throughout the preparation process, the ministry and the Greek consultants it had retained to develop the project—Doxiadis Associates International—did not support cost-recovery driven upgrading. Rather, they advocated the one-off construction of a “model city for the poor” the subsequent expansion of which would require further external funding.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, from the early Autumn 1976 mission, the housing and reconstruction ministry was hostile to the idea of upgrading informal settlements *in situ*—initially refusing to discuss them with the Bank. One British consultant on the project privately recalled that “they had plans already prepared to bulldoze most of them down and to build high-rise public-sector flats.” Even after Bank pre-empted consideration of this option by declining to back any demolition and resettlement of informal communities, the ministry would still periodically suggest that upgrading was not really necessary as the Cairo poor could be relocated to one of the free-standing new desert cities—which the Egyptians had also unsuccessfully asked the Bank to fund.<sup>24</sup>

A similar absence of consensus was apparent in the selection of Manshiet Nasser (see 2.3.2) for the Cairo upgrading component. The Doxiadis consultants wanted to demolish and rebuild it.<sup>25</sup> Whereas the Bank’s consultants had succeeded in convincing the working-level engineers in the Cairo governorate of the value of balancing infrastructure standards and costs as part of a process of incremental upgrading, the top-down Doxiadis approach—which was ultimately rejected by the Bank—would have completely disconnected them.<sup>26</sup> The second site selected was a Zabbalin settlement—whose predominantly Christian inhabitants collected and processed much of central Cairo’s garbage—also located in Manshiet Nasser. Once again, “there was a lot of resistance on the part of the Egyptians and Doxiadis who thought that Manshiet Nasser [the main settlement] was bad enough.”<sup>27</sup> While again, the Egyptians wanted to bulldoze the Zabbalin area and evict its inhabitants without compensation, according to a former Bank consultant speaking privately,

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<sup>22</sup> Personal communications, Alain Bertaud, 19 March, 22 March and 15 April 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Personal communication, Alain Bertaud, 19 March 2000.

<sup>24</sup> Personal communication, Alain Bertaud, 22 March 2000.

<sup>25</sup> Personal communication, Alain Bertaud, 22 March 2000.

<sup>26</sup> Personal communication, Alain Bertaud, 15 April 2000.

<sup>27</sup> Personal communication, Alain Bertaud, 19 March 2000.

the Bank refused to consider this option and they were included in the upgrading component.

Despite the obvious disinterest at senior levels of the housing and reconstruction ministry—the nominal Egyptian programme director never visiting the Cairo project sites during the periodic Bank preparation missions—officials in the housing and reconstruction ministry never explicitly rejected Bank’s upgrading agenda.<sup>28</sup> According to one of the Bank consultants: “they wanted the project money badly. They were convinced that once they got the loan, they could use it for financing whatever they wanted.”<sup>29</sup> From the Egyptian side, Sakr expressed their position as follows: “little was known about the project in its early stages, but one objective was to get it approved in order to maintain good relations with Bank officials in hopes of further loans.”<sup>30</sup>

### C. POLITICAL CONTEXT

While one of the World-Bank consultants believed that the Egyptians would eventually be convinced of the correctness of cost-recovered upgrading, he acknowledged that the Bank’s decision to approve the project was, in part, driven by institutional momentum: “once the Bank start[s] investing in the preparation of a project it is nearly impossible to go back and say ‘the country is not ready’.”<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the consultant reported an unprecedented degree of pressure from member-country representatives, particularly the US, to do the project on a larger scale than the Bank professionals thought was justifiable (\$35 million versus \$16 million).<sup>32</sup> While the final version of the project was closer to the latter, a never-implemented south-Cairo upgrading component was included for sake of bulking it up.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4.1.2 THE HELWAN HOUSING & COMMUNITY UPGRADING PROJECT

The origins of the Helwan programme were in an early 1976 request by the housing and reconstruction ministry for “technical assistance from AID in reviewing their housing policy and in developing proposals for new housing activities.”<sup>34</sup> The then minister, Osman Ahmad Osman, was chairman of the public-sector Arab

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<sup>28</sup> Personal communication, Alain Bertaud, 19 March 2000.

<sup>29</sup> Personal communication & Interview, Alain Bertaud, 19 March & 4 December 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Sakr (1990): 34.

<sup>31</sup> Personal communication, Alain Bertaud, 19 March 2000; see also, Tandler (1975): 88.

<sup>32</sup> Interview, Alain Bertaud, 4 December 2000.

<sup>33</sup> Interview, Alain Bertaud, 4 December 2000.

<sup>34</sup> AID (1978b) “Project Paper: Egypt - Housing and Community Upgrading” [UNCLASSIFIED] (11 July): 1 [*Annex F*].



Contractors construction firm, an intimate of Sadat and a notorious crony capitalist.<sup>35</sup> According to a consultant involved in the early phases of the project, Osman had been given a mandate to negotiate with AID over development and infrastructure projects.<sup>36</sup> His proposals for housing assistance included both support to the desert-cities programme and the construction of a subdivision in Cairo.<sup>37</sup>

The Egyptian request for a subdivision in Helwan came in the wake of the January 1977 subsidy riots which had started there.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, workers in the Helwan steel and cement plants had also been involved in incidents of civil unrest as far back as 1968.<sup>39</sup> Often commuting from elsewhere in the city, in 1975 they had rioted at a central Cairo rail station—creating an incentive to house them closer to their jobs.<sup>40</sup> Hence from the outset, the intervention was likely understood by both AID and Egyptian officials as a form of pacification. Speaking in 1989, a former senior housing-ministry official described the servicing of informal areas as necessary to forestall an:

*intifada* (uprising) because these people are envious of those who are privileged in society. [...] They are excused if they burn down Cairo. So to provide them with service is not just out of social awareness but mostly for 'our' own security.<sup>41</sup>

While apparently the new-cities request was an expensive proposition, the cost of the requested Helwan subdivision was “clearly out of sight.”<sup>42</sup> Moreover, it was obvious to at least one observer that the gated-community model of housing being proposed was ultimately intended for middle- to upper-income consumption. Subsidy riots by industrial workers or not, the proposed Helwan housing was likely intended to “assuage any possible (and viable) political dissent from the middle-class and in part, indemnify Sadat’s cronies in order for Sadat to build a solid inner circle.”<sup>43</sup>

Congressional scrutiny and the legal requirement that all projects pass a “social outcomes analysis” in terms of their benefit to the poor, meant that AID could not

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<sup>35</sup> Moore (1994): 123-6, 218-24.

<sup>36</sup> Personal communications, Delwin A. Roy, 6 June 1999.

<sup>37</sup> Personal communication, Delwin A. Roy, 15 February 2000.

<sup>38</sup> Personal communications, Delwin A. Roy, 5 June 1999 & 15 February 2000; see also, Nadia Adel Taher (1997a) “Foreign Aid and Power Relations: The Government of Egypt, USAID and Housing in Helwan,” PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science: 99-100.

<sup>39</sup> Waterbury (1983): 229, 329.

<sup>40</sup> Waterbury (1978): 171.

<sup>41</sup> Taher (1997b): 11.

<sup>42</sup> Personal communication, Delwin A. Roy, 15 February 2000.

<sup>43</sup> Personal communication, Delwin A. Roy, 17 February 2000.

simply accept the Egyptian request as given. Indeed, the early AID studies suggest a preference for upgrading existing communities and various kinds of institutional reform, rather than building new houses.<sup>44</sup> Still, the politics of the US-Egyptian aid relationship gave the Helwan housing scheme a measure of institutional momentum and meant that AID could also not simply reject it. As already noted (3.3.2C), US officials—especially in the early phases of their Egyptian involvement—wanted highly visible projects by which Washington could demonstrate its commitment to Sadat’s government and policies. But such Egyptian priorities as land reclamation and public sector investment—all dubious in cost-effectiveness and policy-reform terms—meant that AID was having difficulties identifying appropriate programmes.<sup>45</sup>

In short, AID needed something to develop and the absence of good alternatives and the January 1977 riots gave Helwan housing political saliency and urgency. Congressional and media dissatisfaction with the continued build-up of the disbursements pipeline meant that “the pressure was on to begin to move on this massive program.”<sup>46</sup> AID, therefore neither rejected nor accepted the Helwan proposal but, instead, further studied it in order to convince the Egyptians that it was acting on their request but also that the proposal was neither economically nor socially “viable.”<sup>47</sup>

#### A. PROJECT DESIGN

One account of the Helwan project’s antecedents asserts that the Egyptian officials who negotiated with AID treated the process as a formality.<sup>48</sup> As with the World Bank initiative, they were mainly interested in getting the money and did not regard themselves as bound by the terms of the agreement they had negotiated. That said, the development of the Helwan project seems to have been protracted, the result of disagreements over its scope and aims as well as AID’s desire that the Egyptians fund half of it.<sup>49</sup> Signed by Egyptian and US representatives in August 1978, the resulting Grant Agreement—evidently the “minimum” which the Egyptians would accept<sup>50</sup>—consisted of a single-area demonstration project costing \$160 million; AID was to supply an \$80 million grant.<sup>51</sup> The formal statement of the

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<sup>44</sup> For example, Joint Housing and Community Upgrading Team (1977): 51-106.

<sup>45</sup> Weinbaum (1986): 73.

<sup>46</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 2.

<sup>47</sup> Personal communication, Delwin A. Roy, 17 February 2000.

<sup>48</sup> Taher (1997a): 103-4.

<sup>49</sup> RRNA (1982): 7-8; see also Personal communication, Delwin A. Roy, 15 February 2000.

<sup>50</sup> Personal communication, Delwin A. Roy, 15 February 2000.

<sup>51</sup> AID (1978b): 18.

programme's elements and conditions, the "Project Paper," observed that "it does not appear possible to design a more effective project given the political realities."<sup>52</sup>

At least officially, the Helwan project endorsed AID's preference for low-subsidy and cost-recovered housing provision and upgrading. Like the earlier Bank programme, it consisted of a series of pilot projects, providing a model for subsequent interventions.

The purpose of the project is to demonstrate the premise of a proposed new housing policy—that basic housing and community facilities can be provided for low-income families which is socially acceptable, at a price they are willing to pay, and which provides the GOE [Government of Egypt] a substantial recovery on its investment.<sup>53</sup>

In particular, it was intended to show that—relative to the public housing model—the cost-recovery approach could produce more shelter from the same limited resources; that aided self-help solutions could provide "planned" and "serviced" dwellings for groups that were otherwise too poor to benefit from existing government programmes; and that cost recovery plus reinvestment could make such housing provision self-sustaining.<sup>54</sup> In addition it was intended to bring about various Egyptian policy reforms: redirecting housing provision from "middle to lower-income families"; reducing public sector housing subsidies" through improved design and "reduced standards" and cost recovery; increasing the access of lower-income groups to housing finance; and, encouraging the "mobilization of private savings" and private-sector participation in housing provision.<sup>55</sup>

## B. THE HELWAN NEW COMMUNITY

Within this framework of goals, the Helwan project had two discrete components. The first, the Helwan New Community (HNC), was a \$100 million initiative to build ten neighbourhoods containing 6,697 units—fully serviced with electricity, water, sewage and waste collection, and a range of community facilities including schools and health centres.<sup>56</sup> The cost of developing and servicing this community, however, were to be reduced by introducing:

[...] new, innovative, site planning and physical design solutions which will substantially lower the per capital [*sic*] costs of infrastructure and housing below current public sector practice in Egypt by reducing [*sic*] dwelling unit sizes on the average, lowering infrastructure standards,

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<sup>52</sup> AID (1978b): 1 [*Annex V*].

<sup>53</sup> AID (1978b): 3.

<sup>54</sup> AID (1978b): 1 [*Annex V*]; see also: 7.

<sup>55</sup> AID (1978b): 2-3; see also Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 11.

<sup>56</sup> AID (1978b): 4

increasing densities where appropriate, and utilising less costly construction techniques.<sup>57</sup>

Intended for “low-income Egyptians” working in Helwan but living elsewhere, HNC units were to be a variant of owner-built shelter known as ‘core housing’.<sup>58</sup> Homebuyers would be sold a basic unit—sometimes also referred to as a ‘wet cell’—at a minimum containing plumbing, and then receive technical assistance and loans to expand their units up to three stories. The HNC was initially projected to accommodate up to 74,000 residents when all the units had been fully expanded:

The idea was that the core house approach would maximise the input of individuals, would reduce subsidies by lowering standards and making available credit so families could afford to pay and, thus, lower the cost to the government and enable it to expand its housing programs for low-income families.<sup>59</sup>

That said, their rationale may have actually been largely political. Throughout the formulation of the Helwan project, AID had sought to steer a middle course between the continuing demands of the Egyptians for a large and impressive conventional-housing project and the constraints of congressional scrutiny.<sup>60</sup> Cores were adopted entirely out of expediency as the least expensive way to supply a plausible-looking project.<sup>61</sup> One AID consultant was personally sceptical that they could be built cheaply enough for their intended buyers with or without subsidy, cynically commenting:

Helwan was simply the lowest common denominator which [US]AID could feasibly put forth and avoid the rancor of Congress while appearing to be responsive to the Egyptians—within this reasoning (and I sat in on this meeting) was the least cost, “wet cell” scenario. In these meetings we all knew that even at the “wet cell” low cost approach, the project made no sense—but that decision was made at the highest levels of the State Department.<sup>62</sup>

### C. COMMUNITY UPGRADING

The second component, informal-areas upgrading, was to take place in a number of existing Helwan settlements, some on state-owned desert land.<sup>63</sup> Besides the overall project objectives, it had a number of specific goals: integrating informal settlements with the “existing urban infrastructure,” demonstrating the feasibility

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<sup>57</sup> AID (1978b): 5 [*Annex F*]; see also: 1-7 [*Annex H*].

<sup>58</sup> AID (1978b): 3-4, 9; see also, RRNA (1982): 9.

<sup>59</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990) : 15.

<sup>60</sup> Personal communications, Delwin A Roy, 15 & 17 February 2000.

<sup>61</sup> This is echoed in Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 5 [*Executive Summary*].

<sup>62</sup> Personal communication, Delwin A Roy, 17 February 2000; see also, RRNA (1982): 7.

<sup>63</sup> AID (1978b): 33-4.

of aided self-help in stimulating residents to create “a safe and healthy dwelling environment” and protecting agricultural land from further encroachment by promoting existing informal settlements and desert communities.<sup>64</sup> It also included the establishment of local community-development associations or cooperatives.<sup>65</sup>

Interestingly, the total cost of this upgrading was initially estimated to be almost \$86 million *vis-à-vis* about \$100 million for the HNC. Perhaps because of cost increases entailed in negotiating the specifications of the latter component with the Egyptians and in order that the total project cost not exceed \$160 million, AID reduced the scope of the proposed upgrading by almost a third to just over \$55 million.<sup>66</sup> From the inception of the project, therefore, informal areas upgrading was a “second priority.”<sup>67</sup>

That said, the proposed infrastructure seemed impressive, including electricity, water and sewer networks as well improved roads, a solid-waste holding site, schools, a vocational centre and community facilities.<sup>68</sup> As with the HNC, infrastructure standards would be scaled to facilitate affordability. Service provision was to be complemented by home-improvement loans to mobilize residents’ savings in the upgrading process and help them pay for utility connections.<sup>69</sup> In both the HNC and upgrading components, the project sought to make credit available to lower-income Egyptians—who were generally excluded from the state-subsidised loans offered to well-connected home buyers—at a lesser level of subsidy. To administer these loans, the project recruited Crédit Foncier Egyptien (CFE)—the state housing-finance institution.<sup>70</sup> Although CFE assumed no risk in lending project funds, the expectation was that this lending would be sustainable past the life of the project.<sup>71</sup>

This upgrading was to be accompanied by tenure regularization for encroachment homesteaders. Although more evident in retrospect, AID apparently regarded it as an important means of cost recovery for much of the upgrading to be provided.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> SUBE [Society for Upgrading the Built Environment] (1994) “Urban Land Management, Regularization Policies, and Local Development in Africa and Arab States,” submitted to Coordinating team: AITEC et al., sponsored by Urban Management Programme et al. (November): 48.

<sup>65</sup> AID (1978b): 35; Taher (1997b): 12-13.

<sup>66</sup> RRNA (1982): 8-11.

<sup>67</sup> RRNA (1982): 10.

<sup>68</sup> AID (1978b): 4, 29-30; 8-11 [*Annex H*]; 1-12 [*Annex I*]; El-Messiri (1989b): 4-6, 16-17.

<sup>69</sup> AID (1978b): 23, 29;; 10-11 [*Annex H*].

<sup>70</sup> AID (1978b): 5, 20-1; see also, Richard T. Pratt Associates, Inc (1978) “The Role of the Credit Foncier Egyptien in the Housing and Community Upgrading Project for Low Income Egyptians,” consultancy report for US Agency for International Development: *esp.* 1-5.

<sup>71</sup> AID (1978b): 5.

<sup>72</sup> Wilbur Smith Associates (1990) “Land Management Background Report on the Helwan and Ismailia Land Development and Community Upgrading Project Experiences in Egypt,”

Land titling was also expected to facilitate the mobilization of savings by securing the resulting investments.<sup>73</sup> Ironically, however, there is little discussion of its project-specific modalities.<sup>74</sup> While some have tried to explain this as reflecting AID's disregard of Egyptian legal requirements,<sup>75</sup> it had, in fact, carried out a comprehensive study of the legislation governing housing, urban planning and land development.<sup>76</sup>

A more plausible explanation, therefore, is that this silence reflects the project's negotiated character.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps for similar reasons, cost recovery appeared to be less of a priority for the Helwan intervention relative to the World Bank's project. The Grant Agreement did not clearly define "what costs are to be recovered" or exactly how it would happen.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, substantial items such as the water supply, sewerage and roads were listed in the "Project Paper" as "not recoverable."<sup>79</sup>

#### D. INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Although the initial set of AID consultancy studies explored several areas of potential institutional reform—including the previously mentioned legal paper and a study of land management policies—they were not taken up in the project.<sup>80</sup> Instead, AID sought only the establishment of a centralized project counter-part "directly responsible for orchestrating the inputs of the various agencies and for overall management, supervision and evaluation of the project."<sup>81</sup> Following the signature of the Grant Agreement, the Ministry of Housing created the Executive Agency for Joint Projects (EAJP) to serve this function both for AID and more generally.<sup>82</sup>

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Local Development II Urban Project, submitted to USAID/Cairo (September): 11; see also Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 22.

<sup>73</sup> El-Messiri (1989a): 1.

<sup>74</sup> For what little is said about regularization, see: AID (1978b): 4, 4 [*Annex S*].

<sup>75</sup> Hamza (1998): 194.

<sup>76</sup> Joint Housing Teams (1977b) "Important Laws and Regulations Regarding Land, Housing, and Urban Development in the Arab Republic of Egypt," Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction, Ministry of Planning with Office of Housing, Agency for International Development (August).

<sup>77</sup> Interview, John Driscoll, Program Development/Information Advisor on the Helwan project, Cooperative Housing Foundation, Cambridge, MA, 29 November 2000.

<sup>78</sup> El-Messiri (1989b): 5.

<sup>79</sup> AID (1978b): 29-30 [*Table VI*].

<sup>80</sup> Joint Land Policy Team (1977a) "Urban Land Use in Egypt," Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction, Ministry of Planning with Office of Housing, Agency for International Development (August).

<sup>81</sup> AID (1978b): 15.

<sup>82</sup> Sakr (1990): 63; Taher (1997a): 105-6.

## 4.2 THE WORLD BANK'S UPGRADING OF MANSHIET NASSER

Delays on the Egyptian side prevented the start of the Egypt First Urban Development project until May 1979. Although originally scheduled to have finished in December 1982, there was very little implementation until that year. The completion date had to be extended several times, with the last credits disbursed in June 1985.<sup>83</sup> Such setbacks and two years of unsuccessful negotiations<sup>84</sup> with the Egyptians over implementation, led the Bank to make the upgrading of Manshiet Nasser its principle focus.<sup>85</sup>

### 4.2.1 INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

At least in part, these delays stemmed from administrative upheavals on the Egyptian side. In May 1978, the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction was split into separate ministries for housing on the one hand, and reconstruction on the other. While the project was retained in the housing ministry, GOPP—whose planners had participated in its formulation—was transferred to the reconstruction and new communities ministry.<sup>86</sup> Perhaps more importantly, Sadat's ostensible local-government decentralization measures in January 1978 and June 1979 apparently shifted authority for land management and upgrading from the national ministries to the governorates.<sup>87</sup> These reorganizations abolished the LIHF and rendered "ineffective" the LIH DU, the specialized agencies with which the World Bank had planned to work.<sup>88</sup> Responsibility for the project was eventually transferred to the new EAJP.<sup>89</sup>

But the ministerial restructurings had broken up the original project formulation team, and led to a loss of "institutional memory" and initiative—negating the Bank's strategy of building "complementary financial and technical institutions that could work together to develop and implement low-income housing policies and programs."<sup>90</sup> Not only was the establishment of the EAJP protracted and time-

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<sup>83</sup> World Bank (1986): i, 10-1.

<sup>84</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 4.

<sup>85</sup> Not discussed here is the solid-waste component of the project in the Manshiet Nasser Zabbalin settlement which was, relative to the other project components, successfully implemented; see World Bank (1986): 20.

<sup>86</sup> Sakr (1990): 62-3.

<sup>87</sup> World Bank (1985): 46; for a political interpretation of the decentralization process, see Ayubi (1984): 67-73.

<sup>88</sup> World Bank (1986): 10; see also, (1985): 36, 46.

<sup>89</sup> Sakr (1990): 62-3.

<sup>90</sup> World Bank (1985): 47.

consuming, its staff were more interested in working with AID on the larger Helwan project.<sup>91</sup>

Most importantly, the EAJP was merely a coordinating agency. “Geared towards foreign donors and hence [...] not integrally linked to housing sector institutions in Egypt,” it lacked the capacity “to bring local authorities to work together.”<sup>92</sup> Indeed, local-government decentralization meant that the real power to deal with informal areas had henceforth passed to the Cairo governorate which had not been “fully involved” with GOPP project preparation. The governorate was resentful of the externally conceived project and alleged interference by national ministries,<sup>93</sup> as well as dismissive of the Manshiet Nasser upgrading “as simply a small-scale investment of LE6 million over eight years in a context where annual capital expenditures amounted to LE150 million (1983).”<sup>94</sup> It frequently refused to cooperate with EAJP, the World Bank and generally obstructed implementation.<sup>95</sup> The entrenched conflict between the project and the governorate was clearly evident following a 1983 reshuffling of governorate personnel:

[The EAJP], at the suggestion of the [World Bank] mission, proposed that it relieve the Cairo Governorate of its implementation responsibilities, especially since it appeared that the new team would not be able to fully master the project in time. The Cairo governorate vehemently objected and [World Bank] did not pursue the matter further, since the project was already in the first year of extension.<sup>96</sup>

#### 4.2.2 UPGRADING & ITS DISCONTENTS

Accounts of the Manshiet Nasser upgrading have nonetheless noted that it was “relatively successful in extending infrastructure services” to the main and Zabbalin settlements.<sup>97</sup> Some 70,000 residents were provided with potable water, sewage, home electricity connections and benefited from improved roads and (in the main settlement) refuse collection.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, in the main settlement, this commitment of capital seems to have led to substantial private investment, leveraging the impact of the original capital and triggering a self-help construction boom.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Sakr (1990): 38-9, 64, 80-6.

<sup>92</sup> World Bank (1986): 14.

<sup>93</sup> Sakr (1990): 7, 38-9.

<sup>94</sup> World Bank (1985): 48; in 1983, the exchange rate was \$1 = LE1.16; see World Bank (1986): [*Country Exchange Rates*].

<sup>95</sup> Sakr (1990): 89-90.

<sup>96</sup> World Bank (1985): 48.

<sup>97</sup> World Bank (1986): vi.

<sup>98</sup> World Bank (1986): 18-19, 27.

<sup>99</sup> World Bank (1986): 19; for a more qualified view, see World Bank (1985): 43.



Such accomplishments, however, were largely in the face of opposition from the housing and reconstruction ministries, perhaps going as high as Sadat's prime minister, Mustafa Khalil.<sup>100</sup> As recounted by Hoda Sakr, Egyptian officials vehemently objected to the World Bank approach as condoning the illegality of informal urbanization. On modernist grounds, they denounced reduced-standards self-help upgrading as little better than state-sponsored slum building:

The World Bank wants these people to continue building their ugly houses everywhere! They want whole cities to become slums! Now we are asked to authorize and encourage this low quality housing! How can we agree? These people do not know what is right for them. How can we the government, the symbol of legitimacy and power consent and legalize their informal activities?<sup>101</sup>

What the Egyptian side wanted from the project—Sakr also makes clear—were conventional housing developments which could have been announced in press and tendered to public- and private-sector contractors.<sup>102</sup>

In this context, she further suggests, neither the housing nor the new communities ministry wanted to be associated with the Bank's effort.<sup>103</sup> They were glad to shunt it on to the EAJP, as an organization closely linked to western donors. Egyptian opposition is also evident in the ways in which the upgrading implementation largely negated the Bank's original emphasis on cost-recovery and sustainability.

#### A. REDUCED STANDARDS

Reductions in infrastructure standards for electricity, water and sewerage provision were rejected by the utility organizations and the Cairo governorate: "all had their own established standards and procedures upon which they insisted as they would ultimately be responsible for the maintenance of the facilities built."<sup>104</sup> Merely a coordinating agency, the EAJP was unable to enforce the reduced standards specified in the credit agreement with the Bank.

In the view of some project consultants, the utility agencies' refusal to accept lowered infrastructure specifications was an attempt to undermine the upgrading.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, the Cairo governorate actually went beyond the original agreed upgrading plan, using its own money to provide more comprehensive sewerage services to the main Manshiet Nasser settlement and Zabbalin area.

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<sup>100</sup> Sakr (1990): 6, 36, 99.

<sup>101</sup> Sakr (1990): 36.

<sup>102</sup> Sakr (1990): 36.

<sup>103</sup> Sakr (1990): 6, 37, 78, 80.

<sup>104</sup> World Bank (1985): 41; see also Sakr (1990): 88.

<sup>105</sup> Environmental Quality International (1986) "Squatter Areas in Cairo. Typescript: 1; quoted in Nadia Taher (1997b): 10.

Ironically, the Bank eventually concurred that, in most cases, higher standards were appropriate given the specific conditions in Manshiet Nasser and that they would “not be unaffordable to the beneficiaries.”<sup>106</sup>

#### B. TENURE REGULARIZATION

Large-scale cost recovery was based on the Manshiet Nasser residents being willing and able to purchase freehold title.<sup>107</sup> Such a regularization, however, had not been implemented at the formal close of the project (see also 4.3.1B).

Local-government decentralization made transfers of public land the responsibility of the governorates: the EAJP had no authority to title informal homesteaders. While legislation passed in 1984 “empowered the Governorates to dispose of land through negotiated sales,” the implementing regulations for the governorate to do so were not handed down until after the nominal project-completion date. The governorate subsequently offered title to Manshiet Nasser residents in 1986-87, but at a rather high per square meter price which it claimed was the market value it was required to demand.<sup>108</sup> The residents effectively rejected titling on these terms by failing to register for the regularization scheme in significant numbers. The issue remains in limbo:

Officially this is because the city government wants to resolve land tenure issues city wide all in one action, rather than dealing with communities included in upgrading programs one by one. Unofficially, the situation is that in the past thirteen years no one has ever been able to agree who can make the decisions about pricing of land in areas whose tenure is not recognized by the government, nor the mechanism which will be used for legalizing. This whole issue is rife with rumors, ploys from the government, and counterploys from communities.<sup>109</sup>

The post-project construction boom in Manshiet Nasser—despite the stand-off between the governorate and the community over regularization—contradicts the assumption basic to most self-help programmes that secure land title is a necessary prerequisite for the mobilization of homesteader savings and labour. If anything, the logic of informal community growth in Cairo suggests exactly the reverse.<sup>110</sup> As suggested earlier, state clearance and upgrading decisions are at least partially

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<sup>106</sup> World Bank (1985): 42.

<sup>107</sup> Sawsan El-Messiri (1990) “Proposed Framework for An Integrated Approach to Institutionalization of Community Upgrading and Sites and Services Projects,” report prepared under a grant made to the Cooperative Housing Federation by USAID/Cairo: 21.

<sup>108</sup> El-Messiri (1990): 21.

<sup>109</sup> Tekçe et al. (1994): 33-4.

<sup>110</sup> Tekçe et al. (1994): 34.

predicated on the quality of an area's housing stock and its access to infrastructure (2.4.4B & 2.5.2B). In this context, upgrading constitutes a kind of *de facto* titling.<sup>111</sup>

### C. COST RECOVERY

Apart from Manshiet-Nasser residents financing the cost of their house water hook-ups, the failure of land titling meant that there was little cost recovery.<sup>112</sup> Its absence guaranteed that the upgrading was going to be a one-off project and raised questions as to whether state agencies could afford to maintain project investments.<sup>113</sup> More structurally, because the EAJP had been established at the ministerial rather than the presidential level, it supposedly lacked the legal authority to retain and re-use monies produced by cost recovery. It was thus unable to serve as a revolving fund for subsequent iterations of low-income housing development.<sup>114</sup>

### D. CONTRACTING ISSUES

Finally, a post-mortem "Project Performance Audit Report" (PPAR) suggests that the Bank had significant problems in successfully contracting the upgrading works, further delaying their implementation and increasing their costs. While all civil-works contracts were supposed to be let—as a matter of Bank policy—on a "fixed price" basis, in Egypt the notion of 'fixed price' was subject to interpretation:

[...] and adjustments could be made with reference to building materials prices and wage rates controlled by the Government. Because the variation of controlled contract prices does not follow explicitly established indices, the process of contract price variation adjustment was particularly troublesome and open to impropriety.<sup>115</sup>

Given the somewhat circumspect character of this observation, it is tempting to 'read between the lines' and surmise that the upgrading works were subject to rent-seeking by project contractors and (perhaps) state officials.

## 4.2.3 PROJECT POST-MORTEM

Both the PPAR and another internal "Project Completion" report, acknowledged that it had had little demonstration effect—either at the substantive or institutional level—in persuading the Egyptians to rethink their top-down approach to housing

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<sup>111</sup> Sakr (1990): 53

<sup>112</sup> World Bank (1986): 14.

<sup>113</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 4; World Bank (1986): vii.

<sup>114</sup> Sakr (1990): 63.

<sup>115</sup> World Bank (1986): 23.

provision.<sup>116</sup> Although generally careful to avoid explicitly political commentary, the Audit report noted that while “Egypt’s political realignment and rapid pace of growth” were “strong incentives” for the expedited grant of the urban development project loan, these factors may have also “distorted” the Bank’s perception of the government’s housing-sector “development priorities” and actually precluded a “more purposeful” intervention.<sup>117</sup> Elsewhere, however, such implicit questions of political context are neatly overlooked. For example, the Audit report and other observers have commented that the original project was too complicated to be implemented effectively, ignoring American pressure to expand its scope.<sup>118</sup> The Completion report is similarly critical of the Bank’s failure to react effectively to the demise of LIH DU and the LIHF, implying that it should have then rethought the project.<sup>119</sup> Such a suggestion, while not unreasonable, ignores the project’s institutional momentum.

Although the Manshiet Nasser upgrading was followed by what a former consultant privately described as an abortive effort to re-plan Cairo’s transportation system, the World Bank did not subsequently attempt any further urban-development interventions there. The Egypt First Urban Development project proved to be the last.

### 4.3 THE HELWAN DEBACLE

Implementation of AID’s multi-component Helwan project was even more protracted—lasting from August 1978 to August 1988—and seemingly less satisfactory. A Cable News Network (CNN) investigative report on corruption and incompetence within the agency called it “one of the biggest fiascos ever in the history of [AID]”<sup>120</sup> and a highly critical AID inspector-general’s audit claimed:

[that] after 10 years and the expenditure of some \$134 million, the project was still far from reaching its objectives. As of June 1988, not a single low-income family occupied a house in the new community. Although numerous successful business development and home improvement loans had been made, many of the promised services in the upgraded communities were years from functioning. There was no indication that the

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<sup>116</sup> World Bank (1986): 2, 20; World Bank (1985): 50.

<sup>117</sup> World Bank (1986): 3.

<sup>118</sup> Sakr (1990): 87; World Bank (1986): 12.

<sup>119</sup> World Bank (1985): 54.

<sup>120</sup> CNN [Cable News Network] (1991) “AID Part III,” programme transcript, Mark Feldstein, CNN Special Assignment (2 December), downloaded from Lexis/Nexis Executive; for a critique of the CNN report, see Denis J. Sullivan (1994) *Private Voluntary Organizations in Egypt: Islamic Development, Private Initiative, and State Control*. University Press of Florida: 174 [fn 6].

project would be replicated in other parts of Egypt or that the government's housing policy had been significantly altered.<sup>121</sup>

Although a subsequent review claimed that the project would ultimately provide housing and improved living standards for 200,000 low- to middle-income Egyptians, AID's embarrassment was such that it never subsequently attempted a housing project as part of its ESF assistance to Egypt.<sup>122</sup>

#### 4.3.1 UPGRADING IMPLEMENTATION

Although initially scheduled for completion in June 1983, the start of this element's implementation was delayed until mid 1981.<sup>123</sup> By September 1985, only 6 percent of the infrastructure provision had been completed.<sup>124</sup> Although EAJP appeared to make significant progress thereafter, such delays were telling.<sup>125</sup> EAJP staff—some of whom would have evidently preferred the areas be demolished—were more interested in the HNC and not supportive of upgrading.<sup>126</sup> Staff shortages also meant it could begin implementation in only a few of the Helwan neighbourhoods.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, the delays likely reflected profound disagreements between donor and client which, as in Manshiet Nasser, undermined the project's demonstration effect.

##### A. STANDARDS

Although the final infrastructure cost was described by one observer as "rather reasonable," the EAJP was again unable to enforce lowered standards—for example, with respect to the water network—in the face of opposition from the sectoral agencies.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, its own commitment to the principle may have been nominal,<sup>129</sup> and it eventually abandoned the issue in favour of getting on with project implementation: "reducing the level of services provided rather than reducing most design standards themselves in order to lower cost."<sup>130</sup> Some cost

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<sup>121</sup> AID/RIG/A (1988): 3.

<sup>122</sup> Taher (1997a): 225; Interview, John Driscoll, 29 November 2000.

<sup>123</sup> Taher (1997a): 116-17.

<sup>124</sup> Robert Williams (1985) "Community Upgrading: Status of Construction," CHF International (30 September): 1.

<sup>125</sup> Chris Banes & Paul Gabele (1987) "Evaluation of the Upgrading Construction" [DRAFT] CHF International (17 September): 3, 6.

<sup>126</sup> Taher (1997a): 116-17; (1997b): 10-11. This is also indicated, somewhat less explicitly, in RRNA (1982): 14-15, 18, 100 [note 1].

<sup>127</sup> RRNA (1982): 22-3.

<sup>128</sup> El-Messiri (1989b): 16.

<sup>129</sup> El-Messiri (1989b): 16; Taher (1997a): 132-3.

<sup>130</sup> Banes & Gabele (1987): 10; CHF [Cooperative Housing Foundation] (1988a) "Project Completion Report," Ministry of Housing and Public Utilities (26 August): 36.

savings were achieved, for example, by eliminating the electricity network and street-lighting component, scaling back the road-paving component and narrowing street widths.<sup>131</sup>

## B. REGULARIZATION

There was no land titling. Although the Cairo governorate had nominally received the legal authority to do so—as noted in the Manshiet Nasser case study—it did not formally begin a regularization programme for the whole of the governorate until October 1986. By October 1987, only 720 applicants had made an initial pre-payment to begin the titling process and none had received title.

While perhaps a consequence of “the lack of capacity within the Governorate; the antiquated survey; and the title allocation system and procedures,”<sup>132</sup> some observers noted that it would have preferred to clear such areas.<sup>133</sup> There are numerous references in project documents and related research to governorate opposition to titling *per se* on the grounds that it would encourage the growth of informal settlements, set precedents by which informal communities throughout the governorate could demand regularization and services and allow newly titled owners to realise windfall profits by selling out to property speculators.<sup>134</sup>

Hence the governorate’s 1986 decision to begin regularization may have resulted from AID pressure. Commencement of the titling process seems to have coincided with the development of a new AID upgrading scheme—the Urban Development Support (UDS) project—proposed for twelve informal areas in the Cairo and Giza governorates.<sup>135</sup> In May of that year, the governor of Cairo wrote AID “expressing his interest in sponsoring new upgrading projects.”<sup>136</sup> While AID may have treated titling quite casually at the start of the project, it subsequently made continued involvement in Cairo upgrading contingent on the governorate resolving the land-tenure issue for the Helwan settlements.<sup>137</sup>

In Helwan, however, no homesteaders even applied to be regularized, probably because of disagreements with the governorate over the land price and pre-payment charges—which became the principle source of dispute after the

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<sup>131</sup> Executive Agency for Joint Projects/Cooperative Housing Foundation (1986) “Implementation Plan Update,” for USAID (October): [Tables 5.2.2 - 5.2.7]; Banes & Gabele (1987): 10-13.

<sup>132</sup> El-Messiri (1989a): 4; see also: 17.

<sup>133</sup> Taher (1997a): 136.

<sup>134</sup> CHF (1988a): 29; El-Messiri (1989a): 1, 16-17; Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 22; Taher (1997a): 135-6.

<sup>135</sup> CHF (1988a): 46; Ahmed Mahmoud Yousry Hassan (1992) “Housing the Urban Poor: A Social Systems Approach,” PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania: 231 [fn 9].

<sup>136</sup> El-Messiri (1989a): 9.

<sup>137</sup> CHF (1988a): 29, 46; El-Messiri (1989a): 13.

governorate appeared to accept titling in principle. In late 1986 or early 1987, a governorate committee set the land value for the first of the settlements to be regularized at LE100-200<sup>138</sup> per square metre—insisting that this was the market price for the land which it was legally obligated to charge, with only minor reductions being possible. Such prices, however, were similar to those charged for land in upscale Cairo neighbourhoods.<sup>139</sup> At least publicly, the EAJP maintained that they were unaffordable to would-be purchasers and argued that prices as low as LE10 per square metre would still allow for partial cost recovery.<sup>140</sup> Some of its officials, however, were reported to be privately dubious of regularization—perhaps accepting the governorate arguments and preference for demolition.<sup>141</sup>

In February 1987, leaders from two of the upgraded communities rejected the committee's proposed prices in a memorandum presented to the deputy governor of Cairo.<sup>142</sup> The leaders insisted that the government had, in fact, settled their communities on the land in the 1940s and 1950s. In their view, they were the equivalent of state tenants and not illegal squatters. Not only did they insist that they were unable to pay such prices and refuse the governorate's demanded prepayment, they maintained that the fair per-square-metre land price was closer to LE 0.25—the putative value of the land when the government settled them upon it.<sup>143</sup> They also noted that other public-sector land owners had sold off properties for significantly less than the governorate was demanding, “and requested to be treated similarly.”<sup>144</sup>

This impasse continued through 1988 when—apparently because AID was still considering whether to undertake UDS “but was hesitant to finalize a project until the land title and cost recovery procedures were in place”—the Cairo governor established a joint governorate-EAJP committee to expedite the titling process.<sup>145</sup> In June 1989, he accepted that the land prices “should be affordable” and in August 1989 issued a decree setting those in the Helwan settlements at between LE55 and LE35 (per square metre) depending on the area.<sup>146</sup> Regularization was reported to have begun in a third Helwan informal settlement—those whose leaders had sent

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<sup>138</sup> Average exchange rates in this period ranged between LE1 = \$ .92 and .80, see Khaled Sakr (1995) “The Dutch Disease and Structural Adjustment in Egypt,” D.Phil thesis, University of Cambridge (Summer): 68 [Table 3.6]; with respect to the range of exchange rates in effect in the mid-1980s, see also Harik (1997): 114 [Table 6.1].

<sup>139</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): 38.

<sup>140</sup> El-Messiri (1989a): 16-18.

<sup>141</sup> Taher (1997a): 137.

<sup>142</sup> This discussion is drawn from El-Messiri (1989a): 18-19.

<sup>143</sup> That the governorate's prices were well above what the homesteaders could be reasonably expected to pay, is supported by El-Messiri (1989a): 20-1.

<sup>144</sup> El-Messiri (1989a): 19; paragraph drawn from: 18-19.

<sup>145</sup> El-Messiri (1989a): 13; see also CHF (1988b) “Progress Report: Helwan New Community - Options for the Future,” for EAJP/CIA & EAJP/PIU (15 June): 7.

<sup>146</sup> El-Messiri (1989b): 12-15.

the memorandum were now at the bottom of the titling schedule—as of May 1990.<sup>147</sup> Out of the 247 plot holders, 206 registered to buy their land; prepayment requirements had been abolished and the minimum down-payment reduced.<sup>148</sup> Research from a few years later, however, found no evidence that this titling ever actually occurred—perhaps because AID did not proceed with the UDS project.<sup>149</sup>

In addition to the governorate’s opposition, regularization also faced bottom-up resistance from the Helwan communities. The informal-sector homesteaders apparently felt little obligation to pay for services which they regarded as the entitlement of all citizens (see 2.5.4c); upper-income Egyptians, as one observer noted at the time, are rarely asked to pay for them.<sup>150</sup> More concretely, the delayed implementation of titling meant that it began only after the upgrading was completed and homesteaders were enjoying its benefits; there were no penalties which could be imposed on them for non-payment.<sup>151</sup> As in Manshiet Nasser, the upgrading itself constituted *de facto* regularization—and led to an upsurge in construction—as the Egyptian government was hardly going to demolish homes being refurbished under its nominal auspices.<sup>152</sup>

### C. COST RECOVERY

The absence of land sales meant that there was relatively little recovery of the funds spent on the upgrading. Moreover the governorate’s willingness to remit a portion of the titling revenues to EAJP to cover these costs was uncertain. While the principle of cost recovery was ostensibly established in November and December 1986, the commencement of trial titling was stopped in February 1990 because EAJP and the governorate were still negotiating over the remittance issue.<sup>153</sup>

Even had land titling gone ahead and the governorate remitted revenues to the EAJP, it was unclear whether the resulting funds would have been reinvested in upgrading. The EAJP never appears to have gained the statutory authority—in this case the claim was made that it needed to become a ‘general organization’—to retain the upgrading revenues for use in subsequent projects.<sup>154</sup> Despite repeated efforts to gain this status or its equivalent, as late as August 1990 one observer

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<sup>147</sup> El-Messiri (1989b): 15.

<sup>148</sup> El-Messiri (1990): 22-3.

<sup>149</sup> Taher (1997a): 134; concerning UDS, see CHF (1988a): 46; see also, Interviews, John Driscoll, 29 November 2000; Judith A. Hermanson, UDS project development, Cooperative Housing Foundation, Silver Spring, MD, 4 December 2000.

<sup>150</sup> El-Messiri (1989b): 2.

<sup>151</sup> El-Messiri (1989b): 23.

<sup>152</sup> Taher (1997a): 139; (1997b): 14; with respect to the construction upsurge, see RRNA (1982): 72.

<sup>153</sup> El-Messiri (1990): 23; (1989b): 11; (1989a): 9.

<sup>154</sup> AID/RIG/A (1988): 28-30; El-Messiri (1990): 18-20; (1989): 11.



commented that the agency's legal framework "implied that EAJP's future project revenues would go to the Ministry of Finance."<sup>155</sup> Not only did EAJP's apparently unauthorised retention of certain project-derived revenues dismay the AID inspector general, its informal efforts to retain loan repayments triggered accusations of corruption.<sup>156</sup>

#### D. SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

The home-improvement loan component—while contributing to the mobilization of private capital in the settlements—did not institutionalize lending to lower income communities. CFE, although willing to service the home loan programme for EAJP, indicated that it would not lend its own funds to low-income borrowers at below-market rates. Such lending would not, therefore, be sustainable post-project.<sup>157</sup>

What community mobilization took place was limited and, ultimately, had perverse effects. Fundamental issues such as site selection, for example, were decided top-down: "mainly to satisfy the political agenda" of the Egyptian government and AID rather than as the result of "a direct need expressed by the communities."<sup>158</sup> The upgrading had included the participation of residents' cooperatives created for the purpose (4.1.2C), but research done in the recipient community of Arab Rashed suggests that it was largely instrumental, confined to preventing encroachment on sites designated for infrastructure, and servicing some of the completed infrastructure.<sup>159</sup>

Indeed, the EAJP-led community development team regarded the upgrading process as a technical matter which was solely its prerogative. It refused to allow the Arab-Rashed cooperative any say in the details of how the implementation would take place. For example, the team overrode its objections to the design and location of septic tanks, which were to be used pending the provision of sewerage. The tanks quickly blocked up with the community blaming the upgrading team for not giving them a say in the installation and the team accusing the community of misusing them.<sup>160</sup> While the upgrading had included the provision of vehicles both to drain the tanks and for solid-waste collection, disputes between the cooperative and team over whether the fees for draining the tanks should be kept in the community or remitted to the state obstructed their use.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> El-Messiri (1990): 18; see also (1989a): 11.

<sup>156</sup> AID/RIG/A (1988): 28-30; Zetter & Hamza (1997): 159.

<sup>157</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 34-6.

<sup>158</sup> Zetter & Hamza (1997): 156.

<sup>159</sup> Taher (1997b): 16-19.

<sup>160</sup> Taher (1997b): 16-17.

<sup>161</sup> Taher (1997b): 19-20.

In the wake of the septic-tank dispute, one member of the upgrading team was quoted as saying: “the people in the upgrading areas are dirty. No point in upgrading services when people themselves are not upgraded. They must be educated to live like human beings.”<sup>162</sup> Such views suggest that the upgrading team saw its mission in Arab Rashed in top-down developmentalist terms, and help explain their essentially “take it or leave it” attitude.<sup>163</sup> More generally, the case suggests that upgrading in Arab Rashed amounted to quasi-clientelist distribution rather than bottom-up mobilization.

This suggestion of top-down control is reinforced by the EAJP teams’ use of divide-and-rule tactics in Arab Rashed and elsewhere in the Helwan upgrading.<sup>164</sup> For its part, Arab Rashed was structured by deep social cleavages between the “Arabs”—who claimed Bedouin descent and generally ‘owned’ their homes—and more recent arrivals—described pejoratively as *fellahin* (peasants)—who rented from them.<sup>165</sup> The upgrading programme and parallel efforts by the social-affairs ministry to encourage community groups as an alternative to Islamist activism, polarised these divisions. Arab and *fellahin* groups mobilized to access the resources on offer, backing rival community organizations which clashed—eventually necessitating police intervention.<sup>166</sup> Both sides blamed the EAJP-team for worsening the situation, deliberately playing off the two groups in the interest of top-down control.<sup>167</sup> By the close of the project, the view in Arab Rashed was that the upgrading had “killed community mobilisation.”<sup>168</sup>

#### 4.3.2 HELWAN NEW COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION

Construction of the HNC was a protracted, sometimes chaotic, process. EAJP officials resented AID’s refusal to award major engineering contracts to Egyptian firms, although the Grant Agreement stipulated the use of American contractors and materials for the US-funded portions of the project.<sup>169</sup> They made their displeasure felt by obstructing the selection of the principal American engineering firm and the technical-assistance contractor, and then initially rejecting the

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<sup>162</sup> Taher (1997b): 17.

<sup>163</sup> Taher (1997b): 16.

<sup>164</sup> Taher (1997b): 18.

<sup>165</sup> Hala A. Omar (1988) “Housing, Services and Integration: The Foothold of a Squatter Settlement,” MA thesis, The American University in Cairo: 26-37.

<sup>166</sup> Omar (1988): 51-68; Taher (1997b): 1-10, 17-19.

<sup>167</sup> Taher (1997b): 18.

<sup>168</sup> Taher (1997b): 21.

<sup>169</sup> RRNA (1982): 13 [*fn. 1*]; Taher (1997a): 110-11.

engineering firm's urbanization plan.<sup>170</sup> Such disputes helped set in motion a cycle of delays and cost-overruns which burdened project implementation.

In the end, HNC construction demonstrated only AID's inability to produce a viable alternative to the informal housing sector without Egyptian support. While it sought to use the HNC component to transform the state's provision of housing, Egyptian resistance meant that the HNC ultimately resembled the very sort of housing it was intended to replace.

#### A. STANDARDS

Infrastructure costs escalated because AID and EAJP were unable to enforce the lowered planning and infrastructure standards—to which all parties had ostensibly agreed during the preparation of the project—in the design and servicing of the HNC site. While the resulting layout was still more cost-effective than that found in conventional public housing, few of the innovative site-planning techniques promised in the project formulation documents had been incorporated.<sup>171</sup> The final approved plan was still less efficient than those of informal communities in part because: “the desire for repetitive, non-varying lot sizes and simple rectangular blocks with their presumed administrative simplicity are the overriding requirements.”<sup>172</sup>

The standards issue was most obvious in the design of HNC's water, sewer and electricity networks which took place during the 1980-81 period. As had happened in Manshiet Nasser and the Helwan upgrading, the initial plans prepared by the American contractor for each were rejected by the relevant sectoral agencies.<sup>173</sup> Despite the EAJP's somewhat crude efforts to bribe agency representatives, they and AID failed to sustain the reduced standards argument,<sup>174</sup> as with upgrading, there were suggestions that the EAJP privately did not support AID and the contractor's position.<sup>175</sup> In any event, most of the infrastructure components had to be redesigned—only the roads fit the model appropriate for such a low-income owner-built housing project<sup>176</sup>—adding to the delays and causing cost over-runs.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> RRNA (1982): 12-14, 16-17, 137-8; Taher (1997a): 106-8, 110-14 [*fn* 7]; see also Basil-WBTL-Nassar (1985) “Helwan New Community: Urbanization Plan — 1985,” Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Housing and Utilities; Joint Housing Project in Cooperation with United States Agency for International Development: 22; more generally, see Weinbaum (1986): 127 [*n* 23].

<sup>171</sup> For example, see Basil-WBTL-Nassar (1982) “Review Comments on Robert R. Nathan Associates Evaluation Report” in RRNA (1982): 226.

<sup>172</sup> RRNA (1982): 53; see also, : 34-58.

<sup>173</sup> RRNA (1982): 74-6; Taher (1997a): 114-5.

<sup>174</sup> RRNA (1982): 139; Taher (1997a): 118-21.

<sup>175</sup> RRNA (1982): 74.

<sup>176</sup> RRNA (1982): 74-6.

<sup>177</sup> Taher (1997a): 115, 210-11.

In the case of the sewer system, the redesign escalated the cost by 20 percent with that of electricity system increasing by 60 percent.<sup>178</sup>

In addition, the Egyptian engineering firm which had been contracted to design the prototype core houses as the models for those to be built in the ten HNC neighbourhoods, rejected any reduction in standards for either the plot sizes or foundation designs.<sup>179</sup> Its refusal led to a protracted dispute which AID seems to have won with respect only to plot sizes.<sup>180</sup> Additional engineering efforts to reduce the expansion costs of the core units—so that they would be “competitive with local, informal contractors using conventional building materials and techniques”—also proved impossible.<sup>181</sup>

## B. HOUSING DESIGN

More generally, Egyptian government officials were dubious of the core-house model, and not only because the walls of the initial prototype houses had begun to crack (the foundation design was inappropriate for the soil conditions).<sup>182</sup> Egyptian officials also likely feared that it would be impossible to regulate owner expansion of the cores and avoid the HNC becoming a “planned slum.”<sup>183</sup> Instead, they wanted conventional blocs of flats for the actual HNC neighbourhoods. For their part, EAJP officials sought to broker a ‘compromise’ amounting to conventional blocs re-labelled “core.”<sup>184</sup> In 1984, the housing minister visited the HNC site for the first time—was evidently displeased with what he saw—and ordered that conventional *masakin sha’biyya* be constructed.<sup>185</sup> EAJP supported the change and received a housing-ministry loan to build conventional units in several of the HNC neighbourhoods.<sup>186</sup> While the change obviously violated both the letter and spirit of the original project agreement, AID evidently acceded—albeit after the fact.<sup>187</sup> Its approval was apparently in return for the ministry’s agreement to discuss the broader issue of reducing subsidies in infrastructure provision—probably related to AID’s Cairo wastewater intervention (see 6.3.2).<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Basil-WBTL-Nassar (1982): 227.

<sup>179</sup> RRNA (1982): 60-1.

<sup>180</sup> Basil-WBTL-Nassar (1982): 226; Taher (1997a): 113, 116.

<sup>181</sup> CHF (1988a): 22-3.

<sup>182</sup> Taher (1997a): 217-18.

<sup>183</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 19; Taher (1997a): 223.

<sup>184</sup> RRNA (1982): 66-71.

<sup>185</sup> AID/RIG/A (1988): 8; Taher (1997a): 221-2.

<sup>186</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 16.

<sup>187</sup> AID/RIG/A (1988): 8, 22-3; Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 15-16.

<sup>188</sup> Zetter & Hamza (1997): 158.

EAJP did, however, eventually resume attempts to construct aided self-help housing. This was apparently because it was unable to obtain any further Egyptian funding to build conventional housing in the remaining HNC neighbourhoods.<sup>189</sup> In 1986, EAJP and AID reached a compromise, creating a Construction Loan Fund (CLF)—managed by CFE—which would be based on existing project infrastructure assets and \$5 million in AID funds. In a “construction by owner programme,” also described as aided self-help, 1,600 HNC plots would be sold to buyers who would then receive a mortgage for the cost of the plots and building their own houses.

Some 1,500 buyers contracted for owner-built houses in two of the HNC neighbourhoods; at least a third of the HNC remained undeveloped. There was, however, relatively little participation or self-help in the process. Housing cooperatives were never established and building was done by contractors, under strict EAJP supervision, who presented the buyer with a completed unit—as with conventional housing.<sup>190</sup> Nonetheless, the housing ministry was sceptical of this approach convinced—as it had been with the core units—that any subsequent expansion of owner-built homes would lead to slum-like, “sub-standard communities.”<sup>191</sup>

### C. COST RECOVERY

Especially since the cost-saving elements of reduced standards and self-help construction had been eliminated from the HNC component and the project’s protracted duration had exacerbated the problem of inflation, the prices charged to Helwan buyers for their plots and houses apparently contained a “considerable” (if never quantified) subsidy.<sup>192</sup> Moreover the CLF mortgage credits provided to buyers were subsidised.<sup>193</sup> As with the upgrading component, such subsidised credit was sustainable only so long as AID funds were available; it was not based on a redirection in CFE’s internal lending priorities towards low-income borrowers.<sup>194</sup> Ironically given the level of subsidies, some owners had difficulty making mortgage repayments even though they were likely from more affluent groups than those for whom the HNC had initially been intended.<sup>195</sup> Hence the scepticism of the consultants who had initially developed the project proved well founded.

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<sup>189</sup> Taher (1997a): 223-4.

<sup>190</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 16, 19; Taher (1997a): 235-41.

<sup>191</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 18-19.

<sup>192</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 17.

<sup>193</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 18.

<sup>194</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 35-6.

<sup>195</sup> AID/RIG/A (1988): 16-19; Taher (1997a): 259-62.

### 4.3.3 INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

AID had originally sought to overcome resistance to its sectoral reform objectives by working through the purpose-built EAJP and by-passing the rest of bureaucracy. Still, the creation of a new agency—which had little support in the parent housing ministry—caused as many problems as it solved. First, by backing an agency “isolated from the rest of bureaucracy,” AID was unable to advocate its reform agenda within the ministry as a whole.<sup>196</sup> More importantly, EAJP had little political base or institutional power with which to carry out AID’s agenda.<sup>197</sup> Indeed, its sole rationale seems to have been to serve as a conduit for donor funds.

The agency’s lack of bureaucratic leverage was evident in such petty respects as its inability to release project materials tied up in customs.<sup>198</sup> More substantively, EAJP was unable to prevail over the sectoral agencies in the standards issue and the Cairo governorate concerning regularization. Tellingly, it was unable to gain the support of the housing ministry in the latter dispute.<sup>199</sup> Moreover, the EAJP’s support for American-defined programme objectives may have been more apparent than real. Although its institutional survival was premised on access to international funds and, consequently, on the success of the World Bank and AID aided self-help approach, nonetheless the EAJP management had largely been recruited from the housing ministry. Various details from the Helwan case study suggest that these officials held exactly the sort of views and backed the very government policies which the donors had sought to use them to change.<sup>200</sup>

In the final years of the Helwan project, according to one researcher, AID had understandably become disillusioned with housing and urban upgrading programmes in Egypt and had decided to end its involvement in them. Realizing that this decision signalled the demise of their organization, EAJP officials panicked and became considerably more cooperative in their dealings with AID—which probably helps explain their adoption of the owner-constructed housing model.<sup>201</sup> By this time, however, it was too late.

Much as in the case of Manshiet Nasser, AID officials retrospectively acknowledged that they should have worked with the Cairo governorate in the first instance. While doubtless least partially correct, nonetheless the governorate was, from the beginning, unremittingly opposed to the principle of titling. There is little indication that it would have ultimately been more cooperative had it simply been consulted sooner. After all, the governorate was directly involved in the follow-on

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<sup>196</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 8 [*Executive Summary*].

<sup>197</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 31-2.

<sup>198</sup> Taher (1997a): 212-13

<sup>199</sup> Taher (1997a): 136-7.

<sup>200</sup> Taher (1997a): 147, 235, 313-7; (1997b): 10-11.

<sup>201</sup> I am grateful to Nadia Adel Taher for sharing this observation with me.

UDS programme which—since its approval was contingent the regularization of the Helwan communities—gave the governorate a direct incentive to cooperate with AID’s upgrading agenda. The non-implementation of UDS suggests that there was no real movement in the governorate’s position.

#### 4.3.4 PROJECT POST MORTEM

The Helwan programme is a compelling example of the failure of externally funded demonstration projects to promote policy reform.<sup>202</sup> With respect to the upgrading, the absence of cost recovery meant that the component remained a one-off demonstration project<sup>203</sup> and was not institutionalized as the state’s formal approach for dealing with informal communities. Indeed, the upgrading did not really solve the problem of under-serviced legally insecure communities in Helwan. It simply displaced it onto new settlements. A 1994 study found that the upgrading had—by improving the quality of life and legal security of the settlements—attracted higher-income migrants and priced out existing tenants. The latter soon began to homestead in nearby unserviced areas.<sup>204</sup> Ironically, as the upgrading addressed the problems of informality in one place, it led to their re-creation in another. The Helwan case hence also illustrates the drawbacks of the purely project-level approach.

As a demonstration project, the HNC was a complete failure. Housing ministry claims notwithstanding, a project review found that it had not significantly modified its policy of constructing highly subsidized blocs of flats.<sup>205</sup> The government did apparently undertake “low-cost housing programmes” in the late 1970s and 1980s,<sup>206</sup> but they remained highly subsidized and yet unaffordable to low-income consumers.<sup>207</sup> While perhaps representing a reduction in the extent of the state’s distribution of housing goods, they did not constitute the adoption of cost-recovered and self-sustaining housing provision for lower-income Egyptians.

Neither the inspector-general’s audit nor the more analytical “Lessons Learned” consultancy study which marked the end of the Helwan paper trail exculpated AID for its role in the debacle. For example, the audit concluded that there was “a pattern of mismanagement, wavering policy direction, bureaucratic inertia, and questionable engineering decisions.”<sup>208</sup> Indeed, these problems did not simply begin in implementation. The HNC was likely economically unsound from the

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<sup>202</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): v.

<sup>203</sup> El-Messiri (1990): iv.

<sup>204</sup> Daef (1994): 10, 224-71.

<sup>205</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 19.

<sup>206</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 19; Kardash (1993): 50-1.

<sup>207</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 18, 36.

<sup>208</sup> AID/RIG/A (1988): 5.

beginning and would not have produced the desired demonstration effects even had implementation gone as planned. Similarly, the failure of cost-recovery driven upgrading was, in part, because AID had not required the Egyptians to put the necessary bureaucratic and legal modalities in place from the outset.

As in the critiques of Manshiet Nasser, the AID “Lessons Learned” paper was sceptical of the project’s basic assumptions, noting that the agency had very little understanding of the aided self-help methodology which it adopted despite the project’s otherwise public-sector orientation. While its initial design may have “reflected the state-of-the-art of international housing assistance at the time,” by end of its protracted life “no donor [was] supporting these kinds of projects” which “rarely resulted in achieving policy objectives.”<sup>209</sup>

But compared to the World Bank post-mortems, the “Lessons Learned” paper was relatively more candid about the project’s political context. It observed that AID’s Egypt project papers in the 1970s, were “sales documents,” aimed at speedy programme approval in order to maximise ESF disbursements and reduce the “pipeline” of unspent funds.<sup>210</sup> Despite implementation problems, AID’s preference was ultimately in favour of keeping the disbursements pipeline open.<sup>211</sup>

More generally, AID likely went ahead with the HNC component as the result of Egyptian pressure and the broader US desire to make a high-profile commitment of resources to Sadat. Without such demands, the Helwan programme might have resembled what was suggested in the initial AID consultancy studies, with more emphasis on upgrading, institutional reform and the practical modalities thereof. Instead, these elements were used, in effect, as window-dressing for a large construction project. Moreover, because of the broader political imperatives, AID tended to gloss over the lack of agreement with the Egyptian side over project objectives.<sup>212</sup>

Finally, the Egyptian failure to implement the project in accordance with AID’s expectations did not stem from a “lack of political will” on their part.<sup>213</sup> Much of the evidence suggests that the Egyptian state agencies involved with the project—and this applies to the Egypt First Urban Development project as well—never accepted any of its self-help and sectoral reform elements.<sup>214</sup> Instead, they managed to subvert them without provoking the project’s cancellation. Hence the Helwan project is a case-in-point, as the “Lessons Learned” paper acknowledged, that

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<sup>209</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 2 [*Executive Summary*]; 3.

<sup>210</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 2.

<sup>211</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 5, 19 [*Executive Summary*]; Taher (1997a): 147.

<sup>212</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 5.

<sup>213</sup> John W. Thomas & Merilee S. Grindle (1990) “After the Decision: Implementing Policy Reforms in Developing Countries,” *World Development*, 18, 8: 1164.

<sup>214</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 18-19; Taher (1997a): 134-8, 221-30.



“donors cannot ‘buy’ policy change even when the amount of funding is substantial.”<sup>215</sup> This conclusion is particularly relevant to AID, generally prevented by the political context of the aid relationship from using assistance to press the Egyptian government for policy reform.

#### 4.4 THE POLITICS OF NEGLECT

But if Egyptian behaviour is not to be understood in purely negative terms, then more attention needs to be given to why state agencies resisted reform. Indeed, the failure of the Manshiet Nasser and Helwan projects is probably most interesting with respect to what it suggests about the internal workings of the Egyptian state and state-society relations more generally.

Insofar as the source material voices the objections of Egyptian officials, they are usually clothed in the language of top-down modernism, legality and social pathology. Aided self-help approaches, for example, cannot be accepted because they amount to state-sanctioned slum-building. Regularization (and upgrading more generally) must be rejected because it condones and encourages illegal urbanization. Explicit acceptance of the ‘filthy’ and ‘cancerous’ informal—let alone attempts to imitate it—fundamentally contradicts the state’s developmental mission *vis-à-vis* Egyptian society.<sup>216</sup> Reduced construction standards, similarly, violate “the modernist preference for high technologies [...] as an indication of progressive development.”<sup>217</sup>

Yet such objections seem somewhat instrumental—more aimed at influencing donor decisions rather than reflecting the actual policies of the Egyptian state. Indeed, Part A of the thesis has strongly suggested that such top-down modernism is more apparent than real. At the macro-level, state control of the countryside has been intimately bound up with its underdevelopment; substantial portions of the urban periphery are outside any easy regulatory fiat. For the most part, moreover, state-sanctioned developmentalism is most meaningfully understood as clientelism and rent-seeking. At the more micro-level in Cairo, there is very little of the city that is *not* informal in some respect. Moreover, the patrimonial character of the political order means that state-society relations can hardly be understood in legal-rational terms. Although perhaps rarely admitted as such, the *de facto* state policy towards the *‘ashwa’iyyat* is widely recognized to have been one of toleration; in some cases, it has amounted to tacit encouragement (see 2.5.3A).

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<sup>215</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 13.

<sup>216</sup> Sakr (1990): 36, 38.

<sup>217</sup> Ralph Gakenheimer & Carlos Henrique Jorge Brando (1987) “Infrastructure Standards” in Lloyd Rodwin ed., *Shelter, Settlement, and Development*. Allen & Unwin: 140.

In short, developmental modernism in Egypt—much like market liberalism and multi-party democracy—is largely a *façade*, scarcely concealing the underlying logic of neglectful rule as an integral part of the post-1952 order. In their attempts to foster an administratively competent state capable of intervening in informal Cairo, donors were not only questioning the ideology of developmentalism. Knowingly or not, they were also challenging the underlying workings of the political order.

#### 4.4.1 PATRIMONIALISM

This dispensation's patrimonial character—particularly its exclusionary, distributive and rent-seeking tendencies—may help explain Egyptian resistance to donor interventions. Egyptian officials may have accommodated them in hopes of elite accumulation, or obstructed them if they challenged such practices or offered opportunities for predation.

##### A. DISTRIBUTION & EXCLUSION

The initial Egyptian requests to the World Bank and AID were for, essentially, upper-income and government housing. As has already been discussed (2.2.1), most urban development since 1952 has been for the benefit of such groups. So when officials attacked the aided self-help approach, asserting that “they felt they had a responsibility to the people, who had always expected the government to offer good standard housing of a better quality than what they themselves build,” they likely meant the sort of house to which only they and their fellow members of the state elite would have access.<sup>218</sup> Similarly, when officials described the inhabitants of informal areas as “animals” transformed by upgrading into “semi humans,” they may well have been echoing the view of the informal as an uncivilized Other, not deserving of the state's developmental mission.<sup>219</sup>

As both the Bank and AID sought to re-orientate the focus of state-provided housing, services and credit to low-income consumers, they challenged this allocative bias. Egyptian agencies were ultimately willing to allow donors to provide such goods themselves, but officials remained ambivalent: some remained convinced that the informal neighbourhoods should have been replaced with upscale housing.<sup>220</sup> In any event, Egyptian agencies usually resisted any change to their own expenditure priorities, whether with respect to housing or the provision of credit.

Moreover, both Hoda Sakr's quasi-insider account of the Egypt First Urban Development project and a study of the Helwan project suggest the continuing

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<sup>218</sup> Sakr (1990): 36.

<sup>219</sup> Taher (1997b): 10.

<sup>220</sup> Taher (1997b): 10-11

importance of top-down distribution: they note that the housing ministers were mainly interested in the number of finished flats which they could announce.<sup>221</sup> Again, the donor emphasis on owner-built housing, incrementally constructed, contradicted this orientation. In Helwan, the housing ministry sought to redirect at least part of the HNC component and even the EAJP seemed to have little sympathy for owner-built housing. More generally, it is tempting to argue that the fundamental problems of affordability and sustainability that doomed the HNC were, in large part, the result of AID's need to accommodate the Egyptian desire for a large construction project.

## B. THE POLITICS OF CONSTRUCTION

Egyptian state agencies consistently adhered to a narrow definition of urban development as essentially construction. Donor interventions were successful only in terms of the installation of infrastructure, the building of houses or closely related activities. This preoccupation with construction may offer some insight into "the means of political production"—by which the state-linked elites have enriched themselves—and the "developmental corruption" through which Egyptian society is clientelized more generally.<sup>222</sup>

In this context, Sakr also observes that while few on the Egyptian side knew much about World Bank's approach, all assumed that there would be opportunities for public-sector spending and contracting.<sup>223</sup> While she does not directly make the point herself, her study suggests that bureaucratic unhappiness with the World-Bank initiative followed when officials realized that they would not be given projects to control and that these opportunities would not be forthcoming. Nonetheless some contractors and officials seem to have taken advantage of what opportunities for rent-seeking were available. The importance of contracting in the Helwan case is suggested by the unhappiness and obstructive behaviour of EAJP officials in the face of AID restrictions on the use of Egyptian firms for the American-financed portions of the programme. At a more micro-level, resistance to reduced standards upgrading might stem from the fact that, in Egyptian public-sector contracting practice, profits are likely to be a fixed percentage of costs.<sup>224</sup> Contractors hence have incentives to advocate high standards and, indeed, anything else which raises contract value.

Finally, Egyptian state agencies and private-sector firms in some cases sought to appropriate project investments. The most blatant example, actually from outside Cairo, was when the Asyut governorate in Upper Egypt gave the best portions of a

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<sup>221</sup> Sakr (1990): 36; Taher (1997a): 221.

<sup>222</sup> Concerning the "means of political production," see Moore (1994): 122-26; with respect to "developmental corruption," see Waterbury (1976): 437-43.

<sup>223</sup> Sakr (1990): 36-8.

<sup>224</sup> Gakenheimer & Brando (1987): 137-8.

site—which had already been purchased, surveyed and serviced using World Bank funds—to developers who put up “upper-income residential and commercial structures.”<sup>225</sup> A similar process was observed in the final months of the HNC project, albeit with less suggestion of project sabotage. The fully planned and serviced, but vacant, neighbourhoods were a tempting target for property developers. At the beginning of 1988, a private company attempted to purchase two of them<sup>226</sup> and EAJP and CFE offered 1,300 HNC plots, at market rates, for commercial purposes.<sup>227</sup>

#### 4.4.2 STATE-SOCIETY DISENGAGEMENT

So Egyptian resistance to the Bank and AID interventions—not just from within Egyptian bureaucracy but perhaps involving the senior political leadership—at least partially stemmed from the challenge they posed to monopolies on state distribution and the political economy of construction rents. But such practices of elite aggrandisement reflect a broader logic of state-society disengagement with which the donors, if only implicitly, also took issue. To understand the seriousness of their challenge, it must be remembered that the World Bank and AID sought to make upgrading a self-sustaining process, at least partially separate from the fiscal capacities of the overburdened Egyptian state. They attempted to do so by lowering the cost of upgrading (via reduced standards and aided self-help); creating revenue streams from titling and other fees; and ensuring that recovered costs would be re-used for upgrading by a state agency that was financially autonomous (at least partially).

The Manshiet Nasser and Helwan case studies have strongly suggested that state agencies were hostile to all these elements. Their resistance was straightforward in the case of infrastructure standards, whereas the process was more protracted with respect to regularization and the reuse of recovered funds. In particular, the Cairo governorate attempted to defeat the titling process while dodging the blame, by demanding exorbitant land prices. In doing so, its officials probably hoped that the informal homesteaders would reject regularization on such terms which they more or less did, realizing that upgrading constituted *de facto* titling.

Such resistance was not surprising as these policy reforms were highly problematic for Egyptian state agencies, and the political order more generally, in various respects. The first is the issue of servicing, especially as a source of patronage. Observers of the failed regularization processes noted that the titling of informal settlements would likely encourage their residents to make demands for increased services. Perhaps more importantly, regularization or official recognition more

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<sup>225</sup> World Bank (1986): 12.

<sup>226</sup> AID/RIG/A (1988): 26.

<sup>227</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 18.

generally would deny state officials the legal pretexts needed to ration their distribution. It would undermine the informal relationships of discretion, and strengthen the position of homesteaders to make public demands.

Another issue is that working effectively with existing communities would entail securing their consent, and the need for representative intermediary institutions. A more negotiated process of settlement hence suggests a measure of state-society engagement and explicit state-society bargaining. The absence of these elements in the Helwan upgrading—and the preference of EAJP staff for unaccountable distribution and clientelistic control—helps explain the failure of the community-development component.<sup>228</sup> The logic of state-society disengagement is particularly evident in official opposition, however rationalized, to cost-recovered upgrading, which implies that the beneficiaries have a stake and a say in the operation of those services. In other words, it suggests the taxation-representation linkage that Egyptian governments have strenuously sought to avoid. Similarly, efforts to regularize the complicated tenure situations in particular communities would involve quite complicated mediation between competing claims and interests—again probably necessitating the bottom-up consent of those affected.

In short, donor-backed upgrading programmes failed insofar as they were implicitly predicated on the logic of dealing with the *sha'b* as citizens with rights and responsibilities, as opposed to as clients seeking protection and favour. By undermining the introduction of reduced standards, obstructing regularization and rejecting owner-built housing, state officials were, in effect, resisting World Bank and AID efforts to allow the *sha'b* to house and service itself legally and without the need for regular infusions of state patronage. Those who bought their land, built their own homes or received housing loans—at something close to market prices—would have then, however limited the extent, escaped top-down clientelization. They would have acquired a measure, however small, of autonomous social power.

#### 4.4.3 INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Another aspect of bureaucratic resistance to World Bank and AID attempts to increase state competence was the failure to reform urban governance at the institutional level. For example, Sadat's nominal decentralization of local government in the 1970s transferred substantive power over upgrading and land management to the governorates. In so doing, it foiled Bank efforts to support the LIH DU and the LIHF as new centralized agencies within the housing ministry which shared its commitment to upgrading. Subsequent attempts to use the EAJP to promote the same kinds of policy reform were frustrated by the utility organizations and the Cairo governorate.

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<sup>228</sup> Taher (1997a): 16-20; although falling outside the focus of this chapter, see Taher (1997a): 275-99.

Although Egyptian resentment at western efforts to impose change from above and the bureaucratic rivalries and institutional rigidity characteristic of post-1952 patrimonialism, may help explain the failure of these reform efforts—they are probably not the entire story. The absence of centralized state institutions—and the failure of attempts to create them—may more generally reflect a tendency to fragment Cairo’s governance amongst separate units. Fragmentation is evident in the ‘dual-executive’ principle; the metropolitan area’s division into governorates; and internal structuring of governorates which does not relate to “the historical, social, economic and ecological characteristics of the various sub-sectors of the city.”<sup>229</sup> In general terms, such fragmentation may reflect the strategies of divide-and-rule characteristic of authoritarian and clientelist political orders.

More specifically with respect to the projects, it limited the possibility of substantive policy reform and preserved top-down control state agencies. For example, AID sought to promote institutional development in the housing sector by lobbying for the creation of a specialized self-contained counterpart, the EAJP, dedicated to project implementation. But the Egyptian government seems to have assiduously sought to separate “responsibility” from “jurisdiction.”<sup>230</sup> Sadat’s local government decentralization meant that the actual authority to approve crucial project details such as titling and undertake project contracting passed into the hands of the Cairo governorate. In the project context, however, the governorate was not a donor client and had no institutional interest in the success of the upgrading—ensuring that policy reform could not be leveraged off development assistance. Such fragmentation of responsibility and authority also likely preserved top-down control, insofar as state officials appeared unwilling to countenance the emergence of a financially autonomous EAJP.<sup>231</sup> Hence there appears to be an inverse relationship between bureaucratic capacity and the exigencies of rule.

#### 4.4.4 THE DURABILITY OF THE INFORMAL

Finally, the upgrading case studies strongly suggest that the resilience of informal Cairo is not simply a matter of the state’s internal lack of capacity to demolish or upgrade. Whatever their deficiencies, donor interventions could have set in motion, both substantively and institutionally, a more sustainable process of upgrading and shelter provision. State support for aided self-help approaches could have facilitated the creation of a semi-formal sector, cheaper to service and easier to manage. At the very least, a greater degree of official Egyptian cooperation would have likely increased the flow of funds for donor-funded upgrading. The resistance of state agencies not only obstructed the Manshiet Nasser and Helwan projects, it

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<sup>229</sup> El Kadi (1992): 49.

<sup>230</sup> El-Messiri (1989a): 8

<sup>231</sup> El-Messiri (1989a): 11.

also probably closed the door to such proposed initiatives as AID's UDS initiative which would have included substantial new resources for the upgrading and replanning of informal Cairo.

Hence the logic of neglectful rule—in particular its elements of patrimonialism and state-society disengagement—meant that state authorities have been more willing to tolerate informality than donor elements to foster an administratively competent state capable of governing the city. Hence the post-1952 political order is not merely part of informal Cairo's conditions of possibility, it also figures significantly in its reproduction.

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## CHAPTER 5

### THE POLITICS OF PLANNING

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Donor efforts in Cairo have not been confined to the upgrading of existing informal communities. From the mid 1970s through the early 1990s, western aid agencies also attempted a series of initiatives intended to re-orientate Cairo's growth away from arable land. In so doing, they usually advocated a *proactive* approach to informal urbanization, recommending that the Egyptian government direct homesteaders towards planned and serviced desert sites. Had they been successful, such projects would have given the Egyptian state an alternative to risk avoidance and tacit encouragement in dealing with the *'ashwa'iyyat*.

Yet these initiatives were even less successful than the Helwan and Manshiet Nasser projects. Few had much implementation. Even as purely paper exercises, however, they are nonetheless a window on the workings of neglectful rule at the metropolitan level and the Egyptian state's efforts to secure external assistance while rebuffing demands for reform. Moreover, they are crucial evidence for the argument that Egyptian governments have had options in dealing with informal Cairo, that top-down neglect is not purely a consequence of limited resources and that the durability of informal Cairo must be understood in terms of the post-1952 order.

The chapter begins with a brief background section contrasting Egyptian and western conceptions of how Cairo should be planned and foreshadowing the donor-client conflicts observed in the project case studies (5.1). The first of the case studies looks at the work of an AID-backed consulting team retained to formulate a national urban-planning policy, but which examined Cairo in some detail (5.2). Its proposals, however, were rejected by the reconstruction ministry which was more interested in the new desert cities. The next two cases are more micro level: a German project to develop the El-Obour satellite city in northeast Cairo (5.3) and a World Bank programme to plan and service desert settlements, by means of the aided self-help approach (5.4). Both ran into land-use conflicts, notably the Egyptian military's own development ambitions for the Cairo desert periphery. The final case study looks at the efforts of a team from the Paris planning agency to



prepare and implement a new master plan for the city in the early 1980s (5.5). They spent over a decade battling official indifference and competing land claims, but with few results.

The chapter concludes by arguing that these donor initiatives were victims of the logic of neglectful rule (5.6). It suggests parallels with the previous upgrading cases, discusses the politics of land speculation which contributed to their failure and argues that the durability of informal Cairo must hence be understood as a consequence of the post-1952 order.

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## 5.1 PLANNING CAIRO'S FUTURE

The differing approaches to urban governance observed in the previous chapter, are manifest here as well. Egyptian governments repeatedly sought to replan the city top-down but their interventions consisted largely of construction projects. AID, however, was reluctant to back projects it believed the Egyptian state could not afford. Its consultants instead advocated planning interventions based on a greater degree of state-society engagement and increased state capacity with respect to land management. Their views are echoed throughout the subsequent case studies.

### 5.1.1 THE IMPOSITION OF ORDER?

Egyptian efforts to control Cairo's growth have historically been shaped by the previously noted fears of rural-urban migration (2.2 & 2.4.1B). They have also emphasized the imposition of schematic order, consistent with the political order's modernist ethos. Not surprisingly, this combination of social pathology discourse and top-down developmentalism has been a recipe for ineffective urban management. As suggested earlier (2.5.3C), Egyptian spatial-development policies have actually encouraged informal urbanization. In any event, state planning and development policies seem to be largely a *façade* for the political-economy of construction.

#### A. THE 1956 MASTER PLAN

The first city-planning effort since the nineteenth century, the 1956 Master Plan seems to have been the personal initiative of the Free Officer 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs between 1955 and 1957.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> El Kadi (1990): 188; see also, Moore (1994): 162; Waterbury (1978): 133.

Published in 1956, it closely “followed the traditions of British town planning,” introducing “notions of ideal size, containment, development standards for new growth and long-range (20 year) planning to guide and control development.”<sup>2</sup> These were embodied in the recommendation that Cairo’s population be limited to 3.5 million with excess growth diverted into satellite communities, preferably located in the desert.<sup>3</sup> As with all static plans, it was immediately vulnerable to the city’s rapid population growth which had exceeded 4 million by 1960.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed the master plan does not seem to have ever been elaborated in any detail, officially accepted or implemented. One veteran Cairo watcher went as far as to say that “It is not officially binding, nor does anyone claim that its contents offer a realistic set of goals for the city or a reasoned program for their achievement.”<sup>5</sup> Instead, it served largely as a framework upon which to hang a series of elite-orientated infrastructure projects including the establishment of Muhandisin and Nasr city.<sup>6</sup> Ironically, such projects contributed to the subsequent urbanization of Cairo’s rural periphery.<sup>7</sup>

#### B. THE 1969 MASTER PLAN

The second master-planning initiative had a far more protracted and convoluted history, emerging out of studies conducted in the mid-1960s but not receiving an official *imprimatur* until 1974. Following the emergency repair of Cairo’s severely overloaded wastewater network in July 1965 (see 6.1.1A), Nasser announced the formation of the GCPC (2.5) to supervise the city’s planning and undertake infrastructure projects.<sup>8</sup> But the constant military, political and economic crises of the period meant that there were few resources to address Cairo’s growth. While the GCPC’s original mandate seemed to make it an independent body, subordinate only to the prime minister, in practice its role was little more than advisory and it soon became an appendage of the housing ministry.<sup>9</sup> What little urban development did take place in the early 1970s, consisted largely of discrete construction projects undertaken by Sadat cronies such as Osman and his colleague Ahmad Muharram.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Serageldin (1985): 123; see also El Kadi (1990): 190.

<sup>3</sup> Joint Housing and Community Upgrading Team (1977): 25; El Kadi (1992): 59.

<sup>4</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 230 [fn 22]; see also: Bayat & Denis (2000): 189 [Table 1].

<sup>5</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 230; see also Rageh (1985): 137.

<sup>6</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 230 [fn 22]; El Kadi (1992): 13, 15.

<sup>7</sup> El Kadi (1990): 191; Serageldin (1985): 123.

<sup>8</sup> El Kadi (1992): 16.

<sup>9</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 228; Waterbury (1978): 137.

<sup>10</sup> Moore (1994): 124, 185-88.

Despite this inauspicious environment, the GCPC nonetheless produced a master plan in 1969 which concluded that Cairo's growth had exceeded the city's carrying capacity.<sup>11</sup> Similar to the 1956 effort, it recommended the "containment" of Cairo in terms of its "ideal size" and emphasised "large-scale projects requiring heavy investments and high levels of subsidy."<sup>12</sup> Concluding that Cairo could not be expanded cost effectively, the plan advised that the city's growth be capped at 9.5 million. Expected excess population, which GCPC estimated at around 5 million by 1990, would most efficiently go to four satellite cities to be built in the desert. Containment and other policies to protect the agricultural periphery would be backed up by a ring road, which would "put a limit to urban expansion and especially to encroachment onto arable land through the creation of a physical barrier."<sup>13</sup>

Although Muharram and Osman successfully appropriated one of its projects—the 6 October bridge—the plan itself did not receive formal approval.<sup>14</sup> It supposedly remained an "influential document" but its implementation was likely precluded by the same adverse circumstances which also characterized Sadat's early years.<sup>15</sup> In 1973, however, a presidential decree transformed the GCPC into the GOPP which—while remaining within the housing ministry—was henceforth to have a national planning remit.<sup>16</sup> In 1974, the 1969 plan was revived and "approved by ministerial decree."<sup>17</sup> By this time, however, it had likely been overtaken by the city's actual population growth which was to reach almost 7 million by the 1976.<sup>18</sup>

### C. THE NEW DESERT CITIES

In April 1974, President Sadat issued the "October Working Paper" which—besides inaugurating *infitah*<sup>19</sup>—called for the deconcentration of established urban centres such as Cairo and Alexandria and the transfer of population out of rural areas. These objectives would be achieved through the construction of desert cities, both

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<sup>11</sup> Greater Cairo Planning Committee (1970) "Report: the Preliminary General Plan for the Greater Cairo Region in Brief," General Organization for the Affairs of the Government Presses (March): 36-7; see also PADCO, Inc et al. (1981a) "Working Paper on First Round Alternatives for The National Urban Policy Study," Vol. II, "Chapter V: Cairo Concept Plan," Prepared for the Advisory Committee for Reconstruction, Ministry of Development: 170.

<sup>12</sup> Serageldin (1985): 123.

<sup>13</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983): 2.7; El Kadi (1992): 18.

<sup>14</sup> Concerning the bridge, see El Kadi (1992): 19; Moore (1994): 187.

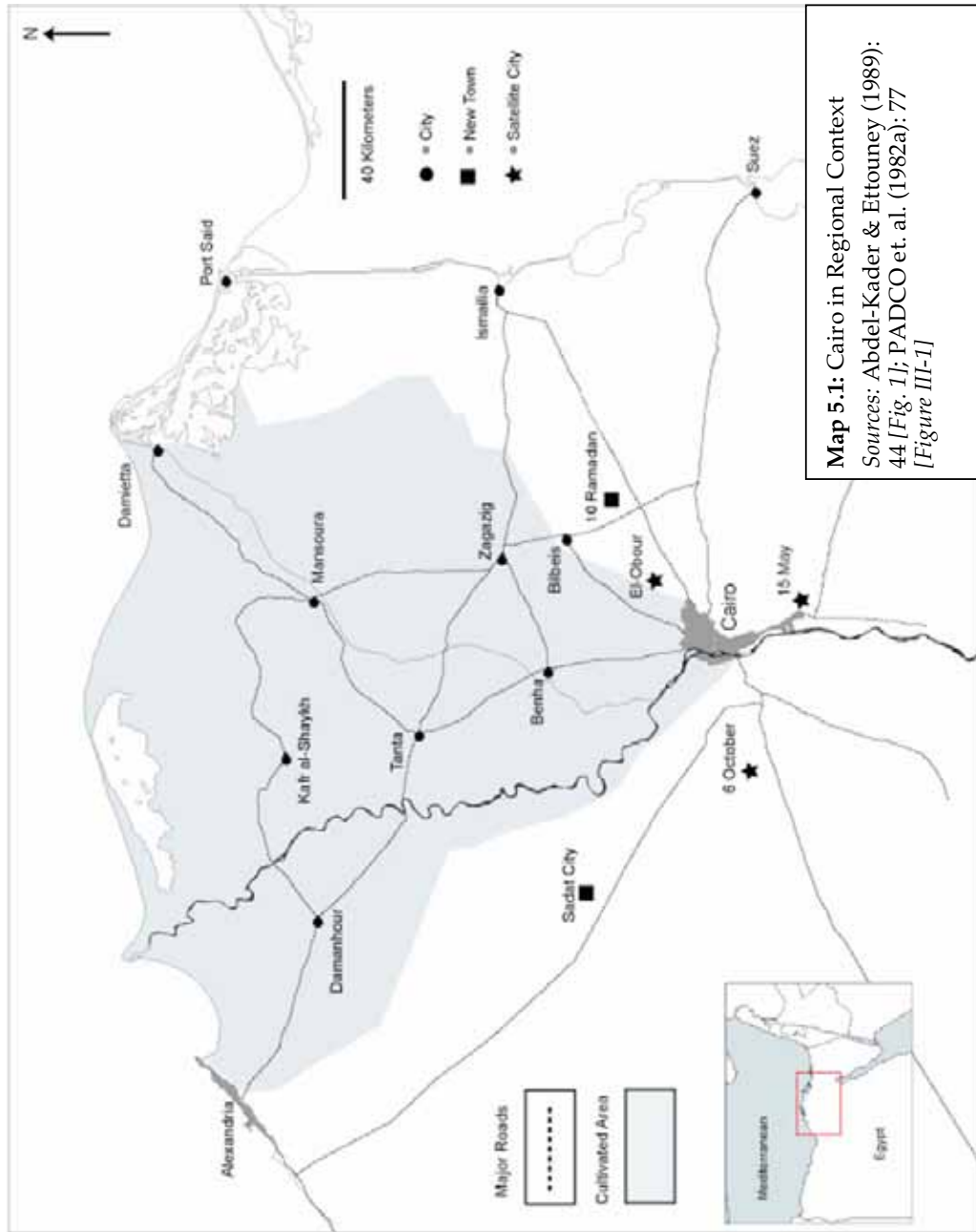
<sup>15</sup> Waterbury (1978): 142; Joint Land Policy Team (1977b): 47.

<sup>16</sup> Waterbury (1978): 142; El Kadi (1992): 19.

<sup>17</sup> SUBE (1994): 44.

<sup>18</sup> Bayat & Denis (2000): 189 [Table 1].

<sup>19</sup> Beattie (2000): 140.



free-standing and as satellites of existing agglomerations.<sup>20</sup> Although neither a town plan nor exclusively Cairo-focused, these new desert cities became the principal Egyptian approach to coping with the capital's growth.<sup>21</sup> They were to be "relief poles" attracting population and industry away from Cairo—thus gradually halting its expansion. Such a redirection of people and capital would also be predicated on government policies of freezing investment in the capital and decentralizing state functions and institutions.

In 1978, the new cities became the responsibility of the new urban communities authority, sometimes part of the housing-ministry agglomeration and sometimes more independent (2.5).<sup>22</sup> Actual construction had begun in 1977 on 10 Ramadan, a free-standing new town located between Cairo and Ismailia (see Map 5.1). In August 1980, work started on Sadat city, another self-contained new town located half-way between Cairo and Alexandria.<sup>23</sup> With respect to Cairo, the new-cities programme included several satellite cities roughly corresponding to those recommended in the 1969 plan: El-Obour between the Bilbeis and Ismailia roads northeast of Cairo, 15 May outside of Helwan and 6 October in southwest Giza. Together with 10 Ramadan, they were intended to house some 1 million Egyptians by 2000.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the new-town policy has been its use as a panacea. Since the 1970s, Egyptian officials have routinely asserted that the new towns would absorb the population pressures driving the Cairo's growth, giving them a pretext for ignoring its actual development, whether formal or not.<sup>25</sup> Since the 1990s, desert development has been cited as a solution to the *'ashwa'iyat*.<sup>26</sup> Hence the new-town initiative can be understood as an edifice-complex phenomenon (see 1.4.6 & 1.5.1A) The Sadat and Mubarak governments have used it to by-pass an existing Egyptian society, in favour of an alternative urbanism to be enacted unilaterally.

But like other mega-projects, desert development has not proven an easy solution to the problems it was nominally intended address.<sup>27</sup> As warned by AID and others, development of the new cities proved extremely expensive—especially as

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<sup>20</sup> Mohammed Salah-Eddin Hegab (1985) "New Towns Policy," *The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with Urban Growth of Cairo*. Proceedings of Seminar Nine in the Series: Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World. The Aga Khan Award for Architecture: 172.

<sup>21</sup> Sims (2000): 17-18.

<sup>22</sup> Salah El-Shakhs (1994) "Sadat City, Egypt and the Role of New Town Planning in the Developing World," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 11, 3: 241.

<sup>23</sup> El-Shakhs (1994): 245.

<sup>24</sup> El Kadi (1992): 19-20; Joint Land Policy Team (1977b): 14.

<sup>25</sup> Sims (2000): 17-18; see also Sims (1998): 3; (1990): 5.

<sup>26</sup> For example, Bakr (1993): 61; Ibrahim (1993).

<sup>27</sup> Sims (1990): 5.

the Egyptian government sought to attract business and residential immigration with large subsidies—representing 20 percent of the state's per annum capital spending by 1991.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, top-down planning and expenditure has proven unable to create socio-economically viable cities without a pre-existing economic rationale, at least in the short-term.<sup>29</sup> Especially as planners sought to prohibit low-income neighbourhoods,<sup>30</sup> few of the desert cities have been able to acquire much of a residential population, and none have “made the slightest dent in Cairo's growth.”<sup>31</sup> Nicknamed “ghost towns” in the Egyptian press,<sup>32</sup> they have largely attracted speculative property investments from upper-income Egyptians.<sup>33</sup>

Nor has the Mubarak government made much progress in decentralizing the bureaucracy. During the latter years of the Sadat government, the housing and reconstruction ministry, as well as the planning ministry, had agreed to relocate to Sadat city.<sup>34</sup> However a subsequent cabinet reshuffle, probably in the summer of 1984, led to the planning and international cooperation portfolios being combined. The new composite ministry refused to relocate, citing its need to keep in close contact with international donors based in Cairo. This same reshuffle once again separated the housing portfolio from those of reconstruction and the new communities. Subsequently, the stand-alone housing ministry rejected transfer. Within the reconstruction and new-communities ministry, the decision to depart the capital was opposed by staff who declared, somewhat melodramatically, that they would rather live in the Cairo cemeteries.<sup>35</sup> In 1989, the recombined housing and reconstruction ministry reversed its decision.<sup>36</sup>

Even had the ministerial relocations gone ahead and the new towns grown more rapidly, it is unlikely that the desert-cities initiative would have led to a broader process of spatial reconfiguration. The new towns had largely been placed in a circle with Cairo “maintain[ing] the importance of the metropolitan area and diminish[ing] the chance of the success of the policy of decentralization.”<sup>37</sup> Ironically, the experiment in top-down modernist planning revealed the state's

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<sup>28</sup> Zaghoul (1994): 8; see also, Dona J. Stewart (1996) “Cities of the Desert: the Egyptian New Town Program,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 86, 3: 469-70.

<sup>29</sup> Bernd Jenssen et al. (1981) “Taming the Growth of Cairo: Towards a Deconcentration of the Metropolitan Region,” *Third World Planning Review*, 3, 2 (May): 210-16; Stewart (1996): 467-75.

<sup>30</sup> Kardash (1993): 225-6.

<sup>31</sup> Sims (1990): 5.

<sup>32</sup> For example, see Jamal Zayid (1986) “Cities of the Desert.. Lest They Become Ghost Towns” (in Arabic) *al-Ahram al-iqtisadi*, No. 900 (14 April): 58-61.

<sup>33</sup> Denis (1997): 10.

<sup>34</sup> Ghali Muhammad (1986) “Will the First Attempt to Move the Ministries Out of Cairo Succeed? (in Arabic) *al-Musawwar*, No. 3199 (31 January): 22.

<sup>35</sup> Muhammad (1986): 22-4.

<sup>36</sup> El-Shakhs (1994): 254.

<sup>37</sup> El Kadi (1992): 66.

infrastructural constraints and various aspects of the authoritarian political order including state-society disengagement, the political economy of construction and the political centrality of Cairo.<sup>38</sup>

### 5.1.2 MANAGING GROWTH

With the arrival of western aid agencies in the mid-1970s, the Egyptian government began some 100 national-, regional- and city-planning projects. Few of these, however, “were either carried out or welded into a national integrated plan.”<sup>39</sup> Indeed, AID was sceptical of the construction-led Egyptian approach from the outset, with a 1976 consultancy paper arguing that the state lacked the resources to pursue the desert-development option and instead needed to address Cairo’s ongoing growth.<sup>40</sup>

By late 1981, an AID-funded study had concluded that the Cairo informal housing sector was a viable form of urban development, representing at least 84 percent of all housing units constructed there since 1970.<sup>41</sup> It gave weight to donor suggestions that Egyptian state agencies pursue a more proactive approach to informal urbanization predicated on a degree of state-society engagement. Since piecemeal state attempts to halt the development of informal communities had been singularly unsuccessful, a preferable alternative would be to guide the urbanization process away from arable areas towards desert sites planned and serviced for such homesteading.<sup>42</sup> Locating them on state-controlled land, would simplify their development.<sup>43</sup> Since they would effectively be competing with informal neighbourhoods built on farmland, plot costs would need to match, if not undercut, those of agricultural land on the city periphery. The attractiveness of these sites would also depend on access to transport and employment opportunities in Cairo.

As with the upgrading projects, AID and its consultants also proposed institutional reform, both as a necessary element in the desert-development strategy and more generally. They recommended the creation of centralized state agencies able to acquire land and manage its use throughout the metropolitan area.<sup>44</sup> They further

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<sup>38</sup> While there are few references to systematic rent-seeking in their construction, for a suggestive example see Ahmed Soliman (1986) “Housing Systems in Developing Countries: The Egyptian Case,” Working Paper No. 26, Department of Civic Design, University of Liverpool (January): 20-1.

<sup>39</sup> McNair (1989): 151.

<sup>40</sup> Joint Housing Team (1976): 14.

<sup>41</sup> Mayo et al. (1982): xvi-xvii.

<sup>42</sup> Dames & Moore (1981): 2-15.

<sup>43</sup> Zaghoul (1994): 147-9.

<sup>44</sup> Dames & Moore (1981): 4-1 – 4-48; Joint Land Policy Team (1977a): 61-78, 89-96.

urged that the Egyptian state create specific tools of land management, for example through reforms to the land-tax system to discourage land speculation.<sup>45</sup>

## 5.2 THE NATIONAL URBAN POLICY STUDY

Conflicting donor and Egyptian approaches to city planning were manifest in the 1980-82 National Urban Policy Study (NUPS), funded by AID, done under the auspices of the reconstruction ministry<sup>46</sup> and nominally intended to integrate Egypt's sectoral and spatial planning in the service of national development goals.<sup>47</sup> In fact, NUPS is better understood as AID's response to continuing Egyptian requests that American aid money fund the new desert cities. In backing the study, AID seems to have had three objectives: to determine what portions of the new towns programme it might support given its concern for reasonable construction standards, cost recovery and existing patterns of urban growth; to persuade the reconstruction ministry to rethink the desert-cities initiative along these lines; and finally to strengthen AID's position that it should not fund them without such reform. In the end, the third objective seems to have been the most important.<sup>48</sup>

### 5.2.1 THE DANGERS OF WISHFUL THINKING

A series of papers released between July 1980 and a July 1982 "Final Report," NUPS paid considerable attention to Cairo. While acknowledging the Egyptian government's "explicit policies" of constraining its growth in favour of development outside the metropolitan area, the NUPS consultants nonetheless estimated that—regardless of the planning strategy selected by the government—the city's population levels would likely reach 15-16 million by 2000.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, they observed that a variety of implicit and explicit state policies were likely to intensify both its growth and the consumption of arable land.<sup>50</sup> The real issue for Egyptian policy makers, therefore, was not how to stop Cairo's expansion but rather how to manage it.

Not surprisingly, the Final Report was critical of the new desert-cities initiative along the lines already noted (5.1.1c). It concluded that the Egyptian state lacked

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<sup>45</sup> Joint Land Policy Team (1977a): 53-6, 79-86.

<sup>46</sup> Referred to in project papers as the "development" ministry, a variant translation of the Arabic '*ta'mir*'.

<sup>47</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1982a): xxvii

<sup>48</sup> This background discussion draws upon: Interview, Peter Amato, AID program officer, Cairo mission (1980-85), Washington, DC, 6 December 2000.

<sup>49</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1982a): 76; PADCO, Inc et al. (1981a): 130.

<sup>50</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1982a): 82; (1981a): 142-5, 178; (1980): 8-9.



the financial resources necessary for a deconcentration strategy based on the construction of free-standing desert cities. Any implementation of “rapid decentralization” policies and high-standard infrastructure was likely to have a high opportunity cost, deplete public funds and thus jeopardise the Egyptian economy’s overall growth rate.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, it insisted that the free-standing new towns were a relatively poor investment, lacking a “convincing economic and industrial development strategy” which would warrant their costs<sup>52</sup> and unlikely to absorb significant amounts of population in the near to medium term.<sup>53</sup>

### 5.2.2 RETHINKING CAIRO

While the NUPS consultants were at pains to emphasise that their study was principally a framework for making choices and assessing opportunity costs, their Final Report emphasized the concentration of development investments in existing urban areas such as Cairo.<sup>54</sup> In their view, problems such as overcrowding and the consumption of arable land could be best addressed through a strategy of “intra-regional deconcentration” whereby the new-cities programme would focus on periurban satellite communities—such as 6 October and El-Obour—which were distinct from the existing agglomeration but nonetheless integrated with its economies of scale.<sup>55</sup>

In particular, the NUPS studies suggested directing Cairo’s future growth along an “east-west orientation” which would avoid agricultural areas in favour of desert periphery; engaging with the informal housing sector and mobilising private savings “through provision of adequately serviced sites in appropriate locations on non-arable land”; instituting institutional reforms to overcome the “functional fragmentation” of local government and create metropolitan planning authority; and promoting cost recovery in public spending which would “enhance the resource base for maintenance and service delivery.”<sup>56</sup>

### 5.2.3 DEAD ON ARRIVAL?

Not surprisingly, Egyptian officials involved with the process had little time for such conclusions. They were clearly of the view that that Cairo’s growth needed to

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<sup>51</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1982a): xxviii.

<sup>52</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1982a): 13.

<sup>53</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1982a): xxix; see also, (1981a): 182-3; (1981b) “Working Paper on Second Round Alternatives for the National Urban Policy Study, vol. II, Chapter V: Cairo Concept Plan, prepared for the Advisory Committee for Reconstruction, Ministry of Development: 71.

<sup>54</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1982a): xxx, 1.

<sup>55</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1981a): 130.

<sup>56</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1982a): 24, 86 & 78-86, 448; (1981a): 132-3; (1981b): 72.

be reduced, and saw NUPS as providing a justification for thus channelling resources into the new-cities programme.<sup>57</sup> According to the AID officer administratively responsible for NUPS, they repeatedly pressed the consultants to support their positions.<sup>58</sup> In the end, NUPS was rejected upon submission by Hasaballah El-Kafrawi, the reconstruction minister under whose auspices the study had been undertaken and also the principal advocate of the new-towns approach.<sup>59</sup>

Although the Egyptians hence declined to rethink the policy, AID seems to have been relatively sanguine.<sup>60</sup> As the AID officer noted "it gave us sufficient justification not to provide funds for the new towns, and in that sense we felt it was well worth the effort."<sup>61</sup> Indeed, some of the study's elements were eventually incorporated into government policy and substantial parts were re-used in the subsequent French attempt to replan Cairo (see 5.5).<sup>62</sup> NUPS continues to be routinely cited in Egyptian planning publications; copies of the various papers can be found in government libraries and offices.

### 5.3 THE EL-OBOUR NEW TOWN

Kafrawi's emphasis on free-standing new towns may be partially explained by the problems which his ministry's GOPP component faced in actually attempting periurban development in Cairo.<sup>63</sup> In 1978, GOPP had enlisted the German development agency, the Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) to assist it planning the El-Obour new town as a non-contiguous satellite city in northeast Cairo. While GTZ's role was limited to technical assistance, a report in the Egyptian semi-official press later claimed that the German side had also offered substantial funding for housing construction in the city and that the World Bank had also intended to underwrite half the cost of El-Obour's basic infrastructure.<sup>64</sup> Although not specifically an attempt to engage with the informal sector, the project nonetheless indicates the difficulties of re-orientating Cairo's growth and reforming

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<sup>57</sup> For a sense of their objections, see PADCO, Inc et al. (1982b) "The National Urban Policy Study - Appendices - Volume 2," prepared for the Advisory Committee for Reconstruction, Ministry of Development: 43-8.

<sup>58</sup> Interview, Peter Amato, 6 December 2000.

<sup>59</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 2; see also, Interview, Peter Amato, 6 December 2000.

<sup>60</sup> For a sense of Kafrawi's likely position, see the remarks of his associate Soliman Abdel Hai (1981): 134-6.

<sup>61</sup> Interview, Peter Amato, 6 December 2000.

<sup>62</sup> DIESA (1990): 11-12; Nigel Harris ed. (1992) *Cities in the 1990s: The Challenge of Developing Countries*. UCL Press: 46-7.

<sup>63</sup> Except where otherwise noted, this case study is based on: Interview, John R. Bowers, Deputy Project Leader GTZ El-Obour Project, EMS Project Leader for the Cairo element, and consultant GTZ participatory upgrading project, London, 13 April 2000.

<sup>64</sup> Hasan al-Sharqawi (1986) "Secrets of al-Kafrawi's Battle with the Ahmad 'Urabi Cooperative and the Martyrs of 370 Million Dollars! (in Arabic) *al-Ahram al-Iqtisadi*, No. 911 (30 June): 27-30.

the state's land-management policies. GOPP and GTZ were unable to gain control of the land from the Egyptian military and the subsequent efforts of Kafrawi's ministry to develop a nearby site were frustrated by a private land-development cooperative.

### 5.3.1 A DESIRABLE SITE

Located near existing industrial areas and road networks, El-Obour was to be part of a development zone considered by the NUPS team in 1981 to "have the most potential of the desert areas for development in both the short, medium and long term."<sup>65</sup> They recommended it as the most promising site upon which to begin the development of satellite communities,<sup>66</sup> and noted that it was crucial to the reorientation and deconcentration of Cairo's northern areas as well as the future growth of 10 Ramadan.<sup>67</sup> For their part, the GTZ planners saw the site as having a strong internal economic rationale. Adjacent to the airport and the planned Cairo ring-road, it was linked to the international air-freight and agricultural commodities processing sectors.

But GOPP and GTZ were not the only parties interested in the area. Indeed, their 1980 "Master Plan Study" noted the activities of a number of groups and that they were not "guided and controlled by any development plan for the entire Project Site Area."<sup>68</sup> These groups included the Arab Contractors and the Ahmad 'Urabi cooperative, both of which were engaged in land-reclamation projects with the latter also allowing its members to build "country [houses]."<sup>69</sup> Most importantly, the Egyptian military had a substantial presence in the area. During the 1973 war, the area housed surface-to-air missile batteries defending the capital. Although peace with Israel had somewhat negated this function, the military continued to hold land for camps, factories and housing.<sup>70</sup> Interestingly, the 1980 study's transmittal letter from the head of GOPP to Kafrawi notes the "necessity to monitor and coordinate development forces at the sub-regional level" suggesting that GOPP was well aware of the competition in faced in attempting to develop El-Obour.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1981a) p. v. (*Appendix II*).

<sup>66</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1981b): 72.

<sup>67</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1981a): 173, 183.

<sup>68</sup> Egyptian/German El-Obour Master Plan Study Group (1980) "El-Obour Master Plan Study: Phase A/B Areal Analysis," Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Reconstruction and State for Housing and Reconstruction: B/1.

<sup>69</sup> Egyptian/German El-Obour Master Plan Study Group (1980): G/10-G/11.

<sup>70</sup> Egyptian/German El-Obour Master Plan Study Group (1980): E/13-E/15, E/17-E/18.

<sup>71</sup> Michel Fouad to H. El-Kafrawy (31 March 1981) in Egyptian/German El-Obour Master Plan Study Group (1980): 2-3.

### 5.3.2 THE DIFFICULTIES OF IMPLEMENTATION

Such fears were well founded. In June 1982, GOPP approved the GTZ-produced urbanization plan and in December 1982 a prime-ministerial decree designated a 10,000 feddan<sup>72</sup> site for El-Obour.<sup>73</sup> But while the defence ministry had reportedly given its permission for the project in October 1981, GTZ and GOPP were unable to begin implementation in 1982-83 because it would not give a final approval. Repeated efforts to negotiate with it—the services of a retired senior officer had been retained to facilitate these contacts—and secure from it an estimate of what it would cost GOPP to gain access to the land were ineffectual. In part, this was likely a reflection of GOPP's weak position in the Egyptian bureaucracy,<sup>74</sup> but it also suggests the importance which the military placed on keeping control of the Cairo desert periphery. Indeed, the project may have been intended to challenge it, in the words of a former GTZ consultant on the project, as a “mechanism for unlocking these [land] problems.”<sup>75</sup>

German participation ended in mid-1985 with the departure of the last GTZ consultant. In early 1986, the new urban communities authority and the defence ministry agreed on a smaller 5,000 feddan site. Part of this area, however, was occupied by the 'Urabi cooperative which was accused of illegally seizing land in excess of that which had been allotted to it by the agriculture ministry. Efforts by the authority to gain control over the land led to a court case, but it was eventually forced to abandon its efforts to develop the town.<sup>76</sup>

Nonetheless, some development of the area does seem to have eventually been allowed to take place. A 1996 promotional guide to the new-cities programme includes El-Obour, but it notes that only half the area is built and makes no substantive mention of any industrial activities specific to it.<sup>77</sup> Although intended to house 360,000 people by 2000, it had only slightly over 1,200 residents by 1994.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> 1 feddan = .4271 hectares.

<sup>73</sup> Al-Sharqawi (1986): 28.

<sup>74</sup> Concerning GOPP, see also Elkhishin (1990): 148-9.

<sup>75</sup> Interview, John R. Bowers, 13 April 2000.

<sup>76</sup> Al-Sharqawi (1986): 29-30.

<sup>77</sup> Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities (1996) “1976-1996, Twenty Years of Development: We Build for People - New Communities in Egypt,” npn.

<sup>78</sup> Mahmoud Yousry & Tarek A. Aboul Atta (1997) “The Challenge of Urban Growth in Cairo” in Carole Rakodi ed., *The Urban Challenge in Africa: Growth and Management of its Large Cities*. United Nations University Press: 145.

## 5.4 THE EXTENSION OF MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Such challenges of land acquisition and development are very clearly illustrated in the World Bank's abortive Extension of Municipal Services (EMS) project. EMS was to be an aided self-help programme intended to redirect would-be informal homesteaders towards serviced desert areas along the lines suggested by NUPS and other studies.<sup>79</sup> Begun in August 1984, the programme was hampered by the reluctance of the military and others in control of public-sector land to allocate sites to it, as well as the Cairo governorate's opposition to the aided self-help approach. By September 1985, programme funds had been exhausted without any implementation having taken place.

### 5.4.1 PROJECT DESIGN

EMS was to begin by identifying suitable sites for desert development. The process would include gaining site approval from the relevant public authorities and preparing "detailed designs" for 420 hectares of "serviced land" in the Cairo governorate and 210 hectares in the Giza governorate. The sites were intended to be more affordable than relatively unserviced agricultural subdivisions and would attract those who would otherwise homestead informally. In keeping with the aided self-help paradigm, the state was supposed to do what it did it best and supply the planning and infrastructure. Ideally, the "dynamism of the informal sector" would then be harnessed as homesteaders and builders were allowed to put up shelter at prices which they and their customers could afford.<sup>80</sup>

The sites were to "cover roughly the same areas as the agricultural land now consumed by development in one year."<sup>81</sup> Ultimately, EMS was to lead to a "rolling programme" annually producing an equivalent to the agricultural land which would otherwise be urbanized.<sup>82</sup> Cost recovery was built into the plan with income from land sales to be used in funding succeeding iterations of the land-development process—so as to "minimise the need for further external capital finance."<sup>83</sup> Project emphasis on strengthening the state's land-allocation and management capacity was evident in that the EMS terms of reference called for the formation of a land-development agency.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1982a): 11, 24, 85, 89, 93; (1981a):. 185-6; see also, Dames & Moore (1981).

<sup>80</sup> Interview, Kevin Tayler, 17 November 1999.

<sup>81</sup> Kevin Tayler & Ian Green (n.d.) npn.

<sup>82</sup> Interview, Kevin Tayler, 17 November 1999.

<sup>83</sup> Steinberg (1990) p. 129.

<sup>84</sup> Tayler & Green (nd) npn.

The agreement covering the preliminary phase of the project required that the detailed designs be presented to the governorates for approval a year after its start. Although not stated explicitly, the likely intention was that they would form the basis of the governorates' subsequent application for World-Bank credits which would fund the detailed planning of the selected areas and then project implementation.

#### 5.4.2 EGYPTIAN RESISTANCE

Not surprisingly in light of the previous cases, EMS foundered over the issues of land acquisition and the acceptable development thereof. Much like the Manshiet Nasser and Helwan projects, it seems to have largely been a donor-conceived project accepted by Egyptian officials "because they saw the possibility of money being there" but then stone-walled when its implications became evident.<sup>85</sup>

With respect to land acquisition, the EMS team was hampered by the lack of capacity within the governorates to determine land ownership with any degree of precision.<sup>86</sup> While it was able to identify a number of vacant sites in southeast Cairo with access to the centre and job-producing industrial areas, the best were "already assigned to land development companies, occupied by the military or designated as archaeologically important and protected from development."<sup>87</sup> Others were part of large areas designated for quarrying. The land-development companies were oriented to building upper-income housing and the areas under their control were thus inaccessible to EMS. Despite negotiations—again facilitated by the same retired officer retained in El-Obour—this was also true of the military-owned sites and even of some non-military areas, the civil development of which still required defence-ministry approval. As a subsequent observer of the project noted, "the Armed Forces were reluctant to relinquish land under their control, largely because these lands [...] are expected to yield high, speculative gains."<sup>88</sup>

As a result of these constraints, the only sites for which approval was nominally forthcoming were well into the desert. In the Cairo governorate, they were on the city periphery "several kilometers from the nearest existing development."<sup>89</sup> The remoteness of this location—although eventually the site of a conventional *masakin sha'biyya*—negated the development concept in two ways. First, it made the site less attractive to informal homesteaders who would presumably need to travel to Cairo for work. Second, as the site could not be easily connected to existing networks, and utility officials resisted offering any connections, adequate servicing required

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<sup>85</sup> Interview, Kevin Tayler, 17 November 1999.

<sup>86</sup> Tayler & Green (n.d.) npn.

<sup>87</sup> Tayler & Green (n.d.) npn.

<sup>88</sup> Steinberg (1990): 129-30.

<sup>89</sup> Tayler & Green (n.d.) npn.

infrastructure provision beyond the parameters of the EMS programme and entailed additional costs which would eventually have to be passed on to the homesteaders.<sup>90</sup>

In Giza, the situation was worse as there actually was a shortage of close-in desert land except on the off-limits Pyramids plateau. Consequently the EMS site was along the Alexandria desert road, behind the Pyramids. This location, however, conflicted with another proposed satellite settlement, and its distance from the edge of the metropolitan area exceeded the project terms of reference.<sup>91</sup> Both these factors effectively precluded further development of the programme in Giza.

The second issue which derailed EMS was opposition from the Cairo governorate whose officials rejected the proposed settlements as “substandard” and expressed considerable hostility to the idea that they should tolerate, if not accept, the informal development process.<sup>92</sup> According to former project consultants, the governor Yusuf Sabri Abu Talib—who subsequently became defence minister in 1989<sup>93</sup>—described such low-income settlements in tactical terms as “encircling” the city and indicated that he did not want to be remembered as the governor who permitted the building of slum housing.<sup>94</sup> One former project consultant, however, saw the governor’s opposition to the proposed development as also consistent with the Egyptian military’s rejection of any low-income housing development in the areas it controlled on the Cairo desert periphery: “[...] at the end of the day, it was really a cleft-stick situation when he would, as a military man, never have said anything that would actually usurp the [military].”<sup>95</sup>

After protracted delays, the governorate rejected the detailed designs submitted by the project consulting company in May 1985—citing a seldom-invoked law on the minimum servicing of land subdivisions which did not actually apply to a public-sector project like EMS—and demanded that they be completely reworked.<sup>96</sup> The company, however, was paying for a large staff of consultants and suffering financially. The governorate’s time-consuming review of the project and stalling of the approval process was delaying their payment for the work already completed. They could not afford to continue further on these terms and—uncertain as to whether they would ever get paid—were forced to leave the project. By September 1985, EMS was “dead.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Interview, Kevin Tayler, 17 November 1999.

<sup>91</sup> Tayler & Green (n.d.) npn; see also, Interview, David Sims, 31 May 1997.

<sup>92</sup> Tayler & Green (n.d.) npn; Interviews, Kevin Tayler, 17 November 1999; Linda Oldham, 11 April 1997; see also Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 3.

<sup>93</sup> Ino et al. (1989): 107.

<sup>94</sup> Interviews, Kevin Tayler, 17 November 1999; David Sims, 31 May 1997.

<sup>95</sup> Interview, John R. Bowers, 13 April 2000.

<sup>96</sup> Interview, David Sims, 31 May 1997.

<sup>97</sup> Interview, Kevin Tayler, 17 November 1999.

## 5.5 THE GREATER CAIRO REGION MASTER SCHEME

In August 1981, the Paris planning agency, the Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région d'Ile-de-France (IAURIF), began a technical assistance programme with the GOPP—jointly funded by the Paris region and the French foreign ministry—in support of a new Cairo city plan. Apparently Kafrawi had previously visited Paris and had been very impressed by its planning, particularly the new satellite towns.<sup>98</sup> The IAURIF/GOPP “Greater Cairo Region Master Scheme” was submitted in May 1982, formally approved by Mubarak in March 1983 and elaborated in a series of follow-on studies through 1996.<sup>99</sup> Although “rooted in ideas and concepts” from the 1965 Paris “Schéma Directeur,”<sup>100</sup> it nonetheless repeatedly cited NUPS and recommended projects similar to El-Obour and EMS.<sup>101</sup> Its failure to have much impact on the city’s growth—although in part a consequence of its highly technocratic character—is entirely consistent with the broader pattern of abortive donor interventions observed throughout this chapter.<sup>102</sup>

### 5.5.1 DECONCENTRATING CAIRO

While the Scheme documents are perhaps more diplomatically worded than the NUPS studies,<sup>103</sup> nonetheless their analyses of Cairo’s growth have significant similarities. For example, the IAURIF team discarded any simple notion of Cairo as dysfunctional, emphasizing that the metropolitan area had a “high economic potential” which alternatives to it would have to match.<sup>104</sup> Although agreeing with the Egyptian view that the city’s growth needed to be limited, they noted that the highly subsidized construction of new towns had not served to deconcentrate it.<sup>105</sup> Not unlike the NUPS study, the IAURIF consultants advocated deconcentrating the Cairo central business district in favour of new communities located around the existing metropolitan area in such a way as to protect arable land.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Interview, Marcel Belliot, 26 March 2001.

<sup>99</sup> For a brief outline of the project’s history through the early 1990s, see IAURIF/GOPP (1991) “Greater Cairo Region Master Scheme: Implementation Assessment Updating Proposals,” Ministry of Development, New Communities, Housing and Public Utilities (May): 1.

<sup>100</sup> Elkhishin (1990): 1.

<sup>101</sup> For linkages to NUPS, see GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983): 2-6 – 2-6.

<sup>102</sup> For critiques of the Scheme’s top-down nature, see Gertel & Kuppinger (1994): 280-4; Interviews, John R. Bowers, 13 April 2000; David Sims, 31 May 1997; Kevin Tayler, 17 November 1999.

<sup>103</sup> For example, GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983): 3-23.

<sup>104</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983): 2-7.

<sup>105</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983): 1-24, 2-8, 7-1 – 7-2.

<sup>106</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983): 2-7, 4-9, 4-12, 7-1 – 7-2.



To this end, the Scheme proposed a series of projects including road “development corridors” with the aim of directing future growth into the desert.<sup>107</sup> The IAURIF team also recommended institutional reform: Cairo should be thought of as a single “Urban Region” requiring a permanent planning authority/land-management agency.<sup>108</sup> Of these initiatives, three require particular scrutiny.

#### A. HOMOGENOUS SECTORS

The Scheme’s apparent centre-piece was its recommendation that Cairo be divided into approximately sixteen self-contained “homogenous sectors” (HS) which would be administratively autonomous and were expected to become economically self-sufficient over time (see Map 5.2).<sup>109</sup> The homogenous-sectors concept would also provide the basic framework for land use and development decisions. Deconcentration of the centre would take place as populations and jobs relocated from core to periphery sectors.

#### B. NEW SETTLEMENTS

This process of deconcentration would depend on the construction of ten autonomous “new settlements” to be constructed on the edges of metropolitan area, in which the periphery sectors would be anchored (see Map 5.2). Each would house between 200-300,000 Cairenes and would be expected to absorb about a third of the city’s growth—approximately 2 million people—through 2000.<sup>110</sup> The settlements would differ from existing satellite cities in that they were intended for lower-income groups which would otherwise settle in informal areas.<sup>111</sup> Hence they resembled the semi-formal communities proposed in NUPS and EMS offering “construction standards and costs similar to those found in existing informal housing [...]”<sup>112</sup> Cost recovery from homesteaders and dependence on satellite cities for higher-level public services meant that they would be relatively inexpensive to build.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983): 3-1, 4-7 – 4-9, 5-5 – 5-8.

<sup>108</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983): 2-16, 7-6 – 7-8; Interview, Jean-Louis Pagès, IAURIF project manager (1994-5) and principal town planner (1987), Greater Cairo Region Master Scheme, Paris, 19 March 2001.

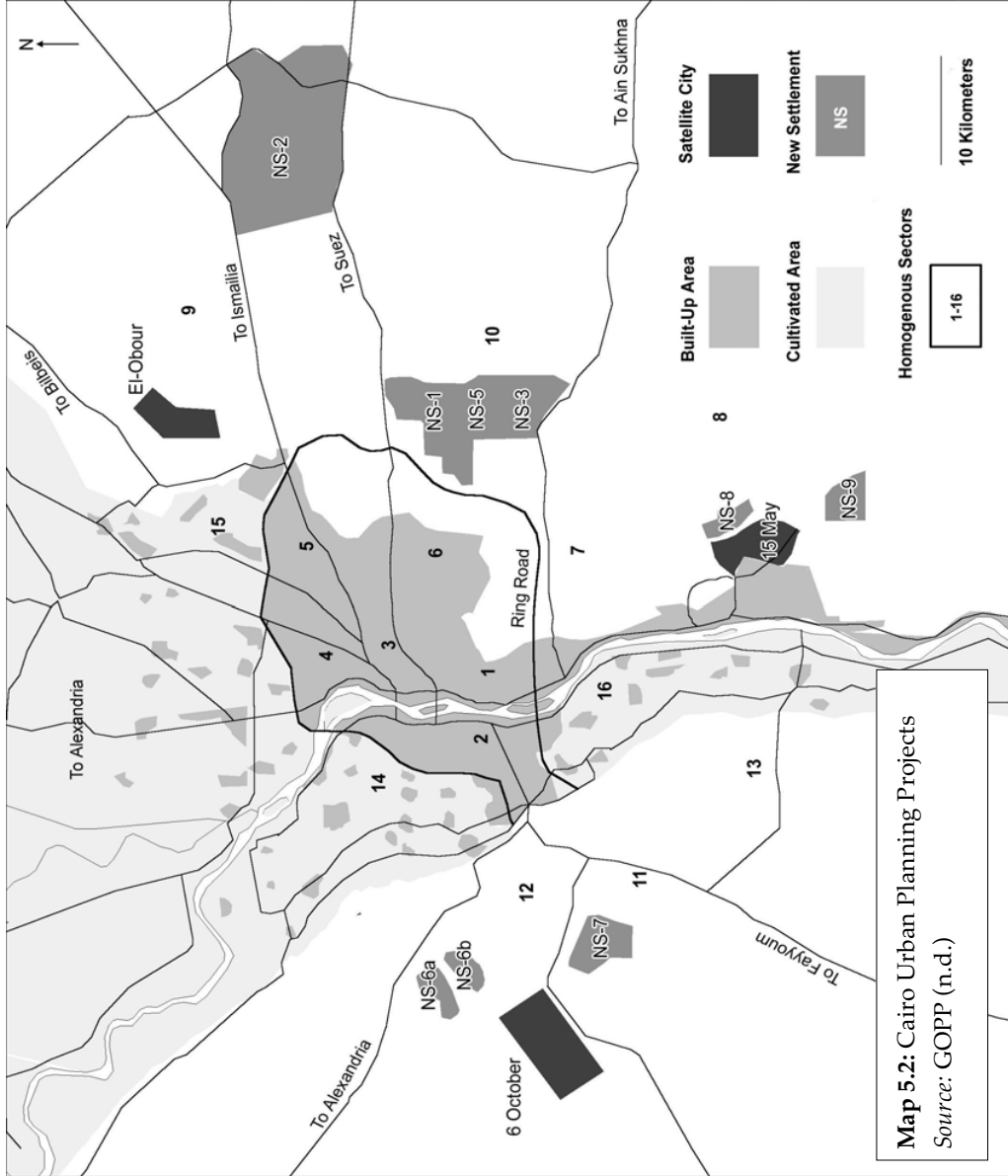
<sup>109</sup> GOPP/IAURIF (1986b): 1-3.

<sup>110</sup> GOPP/IAURIF (1986a): Sect 2.4.3.

<sup>111</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983): 3-18.

<sup>112</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983): 2-14; see also GOPP/IAURIF (1987): 2-7.

<sup>113</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983): 2-14, 5-18 – 5-20.



**Map 5.2: Cairo Urban Planning Projects**  
 Source: GOPP (n.d.)

### C. THE RING ROAD

Finally, the Scheme included a ring road apparently intended to contain Cairo's expansion and designated its "most important immediate action."<sup>114</sup> On the whole, however, the IAURIF team saw it as only part of the broader strategy of creating an alternative to informal urbanization and redirecting the city's growth.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, the French consultants were well aware that the ring road might increase the urbanization of arable land.<sup>116</sup> Hence they urged that it simply interconnect existing transportation corridors and contain no interchanges in agricultural areas. For the same reason, they strongly recommended that the road be confined to the eastern half of the city and not include a northwest Giza arc—separating HS14 and HS2 on Map 5.2— or a northern bridge across the Nile.<sup>117</sup>

### 5.5.2 IMPLEMENTATION

Supplemented by numerous follow-up studies, the IAURIF-supported Scheme remained the city's master plan through the 1990s. That said, few of its elements were implemented. The proposal to create an urban region, for example, vanished without a trace after the initial study.<sup>118</sup> The problematics of implementation are perhaps most evident in official indifference to the homogenous-sectors element; the protracted effort to build new-settlements and construction of the ring road in a manner which contradicted its apparent objectives.

### A. HOMOGENOUS SECTORS

To begin with, there was little deconcentration or administrative reconfiguration of Cairo. The detailed replanning stipulated in Scheme likely exceeded the capability of the IAURIF/GOPP team. In the five years following its approval, only two of the proposed homogenous sectors received the necessary implementation planning.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983): 7-3.

<sup>115</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1982a) "Greater Cairo Region Long Range Urban Development Scheme: Interim Report No. 2—Alternative Scenarios," Ministry of Development, State Ministry for Housing and Land Reclamation (February): 5-2; (1982b) "Greater Cairo Region Long Range Urban Development Scheme: Strategy Plan," Ministry of Development, State Ministry for Housing and Land Reclamation (April): 3-11.

<sup>116</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983): 2-17.

<sup>117</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1984a) "Ring Road Preliminary Design, Volume 1 (Report)," Ministry of Development, State Ministry for Land Housing and Land Reclamation (April): 1-1 – 1-10; see also, Sims (1990): 7.

<sup>118</sup> Although the broader issue of institutional reform does reoccur in subsequent documents, for example see IAURIF/GOPP (1991): 48-50.

<sup>119</sup> GOPP/IAURIF (1988a) "Implementation of the Homogenous Sector Concept: Homogeneous Sector No. 1: Cairo Centre—Part A: Rehabilitation Strategy Plan," Ministry of Development, New Communities, Housing and Utilities (November); (1988b) "Implementation of the Homogenous Sector Concept: Homogeneous Sector No. 1: Cairo Centre—Part B: Action Projects," Ministry of Development, New Communities, Housing

More generally, the IAURIF team noted that deconcentration of the city's core areas was hampered by the slowness of new-settlements construction.<sup>120</sup> Most importantly, however, the Scheme was generally ignored by the governorates, which had responsibility for its implementation<sup>121</sup> and continued to use the 1969 master plan.<sup>122</sup> One IAURIF project manager suspected that GOPP had probably never distributed their copies within the bureaucracy.<sup>123</sup> But even if it had been formally transmitted, local-government personnel were unlikely to be able to read the English-language document.<sup>124</sup>

## B. THE NEW SETTLEMENTS

The new-settlements element also remained unimplemented through the 1980s. A 1984 study had outlined approximately ten potential sites, designated NS-1 through NS-10 on project maps. One was adjacent to El-Obour and several others were located in areas previously considered by NUPS and EMS for low-income development.<sup>125</sup> The IAURIF study proposed a eleven-year construction sequence in three-phases, beginning with the settlements most easy to service.

Implementation of this project component, however, was hindered by bureaucratic rivalries and land-use conflicts.<sup>126</sup> Defence ministry objections led to the cancellation of at least one settlement, likely NS-10 intended to be adjacent to El-Obour.<sup>127</sup> Conflicts between the reconstruction and housing ministries further blocked progress with the settlements until they were reunited in a November 1986 cabinet reshuffle.<sup>128</sup> As a consequence, the number of settlements to be constructed was reduced to six with NS-4, NS-8 and NS-9 effectively dropped from the

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and Utilities (November); (1988c) "Implementation of the Homogenous Sector Concept: Homogeneous Sector No. 2: South Giza—Part A: Rehabilitation Strategy Plan," Ministry of Development, New Communities, Housing and Utilities (November); (1988d) "Implementation of the Homogenous Sector Concept: Homogeneous Sector No. 2: South Giza—Part B: Action Projects," Ministry of Development, New Communities, Housing and Utilities (November); see also, GOPP/IAURIF (1986b).

<sup>120</sup> IAURIF/GOPP (1991): 16.

<sup>121</sup> See the cover letter from JE Cornu, IAURIF Project Manager to Michel Fouad, GOPP Chairman in GOPP/IAURIF (1986b).

<sup>122</sup> IAURIF/GOPP (1991): 15-16; see also: 46.

<sup>123</sup> Interview, Marcel Belliot, 26 March 2001.

<sup>124</sup> Concerning the professional limitations of local-government staff, see Sakr (1990): 18-22.

<sup>125</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1984b) "New Settlements: Site Prefeasibility Study," Ministry of Development State Ministry for Housing and Land Reclamation (April): 3 [Introduction], 4-1 – 4-7.

<sup>126</sup> IAURIF/GOPP (1991): 14.

<sup>127</sup> Elkhishin (1990): 150-1.

<sup>128</sup> Elkhishin (1990): 177 [fn 21].

programme.<sup>129</sup> A 1990 AID consultancy paper indicated that the new communities were “being developed too slowly to make much impact” on Cairo’s growth.<sup>130</sup>

The paper further observed that the government’s political commitment to the remaining sites was “uncertain” and ministerial support for a low-cost design philosophy “questionable.”<sup>131</sup> Indeed, most of the settlements had either been transformed into high-income developments or were relabelled conventional-housing programmes.<sup>132</sup> For example, NS-3 became a 10,000-unit *masakin sha’biyya*,<sup>133</sup> perhaps a *post-hoc* rationalization after the IAURIF consultants discovered it on their proposed site.<sup>134</sup> Together with NS-1 and NS-5, it was subsequently dubbed New Cairo to include “luxurious housing in addition to the public services, open spaces and green areas.”<sup>135</sup>

Similarly, NS-6 became Sheikh Zayed which the 1996 promotional guide described as having “infrastructure according to the most advanced standards.”<sup>136</sup> NS-2—renamed Shorouk and also planned “using the most advanced international standards”—was to include defence-ministry housing. Shorouk, therefore, seems to have been at least partially incorporated into the adjacent Hykstep military city—intended to be the first in a series of some 17 to 30 military desert cities the construction of which was announced in 1986.<sup>137</sup> NS-7, now called Zohour, would contain 10,000 units of police housing.<sup>138</sup> Similar to NS-3, it was based on projects already developed without reference to the Scheme.<sup>139</sup>

### C. THE RING ROAD

The only element of the Scheme actually realized was the ring road, the construction of which began in 1987 and continued through the 1990s.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, the formulation of the ring-road action plan actually preceded the acceptance of

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<sup>129</sup> Elkhishin (1990): 131; IAURIF/GOPP (1991): 14.

<sup>130</sup> Sims (1990): 30.

<sup>131</sup> Sims (1990): 30.

<sup>132</sup> See also, IAURIF/GOPP (1991): 28-9.

<sup>133</sup> IAURIF/GOPP (1991): 15; Interview, Kevin Tayler, 17 November 1999.

<sup>134</sup> Interview, Marcel Belliot, 26 March 2001.

<sup>135</sup> Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities (1996): npn; see also, Eleanor Curtis (1998) “Postcards from the Future,” *Cairo Times*, 1, 23 (8-21 January): 12-13.

<sup>136</sup> IAURIF/GOPP (1991) map; Ministry of Housing, Utilities & Urban Communities (1996): npn.

<sup>137</sup> IAURIF/GOPP (1991): 15 & map; Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities (1996) npn; concerning the military cities, see *al-Ahram* “17 Military Cities in the Desert Housing the Armed Forces Facing Any Threat” (in Arabic) No. 36,477 (22 October 1986): 1; Springborg (1989): 105.

<sup>138</sup> IAURIF/GOPP (1991): 15 & map.

<sup>139</sup> Interview, Marcel Belliot, 26 March 2001.

<sup>140</sup> Sims (1990): 7.

master plan—of which it was nominally a part—by five months.<sup>141</sup> As one IAURIF consultant later put it, roads are “clear, simple and expensive” with ample contracting opportunities for public-sector companies.<sup>142</sup> The consultant suspected, moreover, that the road had an additional security rationale. Recalling the 1986 Amn Markazi riots when army tanks in the centre of town became snarled in pre-curfew traffic, he opined that the ring road would also facilitate the deployment of troops around the city.

Its implementation, however, contradicted the Scheme’s nominal goals. The reconstruction ministry subsequently decided to add the 30km western arc through Giza, although the IAURIF team had periodically warned it would “speed up” the urbanization of agricultural land and otherwise complicate Cairo’s replanning.<sup>143</sup> While the IAURIF project manager at the time said that he had agreed to this change as the result of pressure from Kafrawi, GOPP and the Qalyubiyya governor,<sup>144</sup> the IAURIF consultant quoted above was more sceptical, saying that French planners were well aware from the start that any talk of a limited ring road was an “illusion.”<sup>145</sup>

### 5.5.3 *DÉNOUEMENT*

IAURIF efforts to replan Cairo had been further complicated by “resistance” from the Egyptian military. As in the El-Obour and EMS cases, they vetoed attempts to locate new settlements on land they claimed was reserved for their use and rebuffed IAURIF attempts at land management.<sup>146</sup> Indeed, the French team soon discovered that the defence ministry had its own development plans for much of east Cairo—for example, Shorouk city on the Ismailia road. Despite its size and implications for the area’s development, it was not included on any map because, to quote another former IAURIF Cairo project manager, “that’s a military matter.”<sup>147</sup>

Yet IAURIF’s role may have been more complicated than it first appeared. Interviews with former project managers suggest that their planning missions were part of much larger process of conflict and negotiation between Kafrawi and Mubarak’s defence minister ‘Abd al-Halim Abu Ghazala. Evidently, Kafrawi secured Mubarak’s approval for the Scheme despite its implications for military land holdings without first consulting the defence ministry. While the latter’s

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<sup>141</sup> GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1982): 7-3.

<sup>142</sup> Interview, Laurent Bécard, 27 March 2001.

<sup>143</sup> For example, IAURIF/GOPP (1991): 38.

<sup>144</sup> Interview, Jean-Emmanuel Cornu, 26 March 2001.

<sup>145</sup> Interview, Laurent Bécard, 27 March 2001.

<sup>146</sup> Interview, Jean-Emmanuel Cornu, 26 March 2001.

<sup>147</sup> Interview, Marcel Belliot, 26 March 2001.

opposition may have helped derail the new settlements, the project managers maintain that the eastern arc of the ring road broke the military's grip on the areas through which it passed.<sup>148</sup>

But whatever its role in interministerial struggles, the failure of IAURIF's efforts to support the GOPP in replanning Cairo was obvious by the early 1990s—especially after a scathing report commissioned by the French foreign ministry.<sup>149</sup> From 1992 onward, the IAURIF team concentrated on smaller-scale projects at the governorate-level—albeit without noticeably better results.<sup>150</sup> In 1995, the French foreign ministry and the Paris region cut funding for Cairo-based IAURIF mission.<sup>151</sup> Such technical assistance as continues, is on a very limited basis.<sup>152</sup>

## 5.6 CONCLUSION: NEGLECT & INFORMAL DURABILITY

These case studies mark another failure of Egypt's international backers to foster an administratively competent Egyptian state capable of intervening in Cairo, in this case managing the city's growth. For its part, AID attempted with the NUPS study—much as it had with the 1976/1977 consultancy studies—to convince Egyptian state agencies to engage with existing Cairo; IAURIF's missions likely had a similar tutelary function. Such recommendations were in vain, however, as they conflicted with the logic of neglectful rule. This conclusion will be developed, first, through an examination of thematic continuities between Chapters 4 and 5, then by focusing on the new issue of land speculation. The chapter will conclude by reiterating the centrality of the state and the post-1952 political order to understanding the durability of informal urbanization.

### 5.6.1 CONTINUITIES & SIMILARITIES

Much like the upgrading cases, however, the donors were not completely without fault. Some of the EMS consultants, for example, were very critical of their project and the way they went about implementing it.<sup>153</sup> IAURIF consultants complained that their sponsor, the Paris region, treated the Scheme as a prestigious vanity project and was complacent about its lack of success.<sup>154</sup> Similarly, the NUPS study

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<sup>148</sup> Interviews, Marcel Belliot & Jean-Emmanuel Cornu, 26 March 2001.

<sup>149</sup> Interview, Marcel Belliot, 26 March 2001.

<sup>150</sup> Interview, Marcel Belliot, 26 March 2001.

<sup>151</sup> Interview, Marcel Belliot, 26 March 2001.

<sup>152</sup> For example, IAURIF (1999) "Updating Cairo Master Plan: Elements and Guidelines," report of the technical assistance mission, D.12.3.6 (May).

<sup>153</sup> Interviews, John R. Bowers, 13 April 2000; Kevin Tayler, 17 November 1999.

<sup>154</sup> Interviews, Laurent Bécard, 27 March 2001; Marcel Belliot, 26 March 2001.

may have been as much intended to rebuff Egyptian demands to fund the new cities—perhaps echoed within the American embassy in Cairo—as engage with them.

Yet other continuities suggest that the logic of neglectful rule is key to understanding the failure of western efforts to support Cairo's replanning. For example, the political economy of construction is clearly manifest in the history of Egyptian planning efforts, including the new desert cities. Donor attempts to argue against a construction-led approach, most notably in NUPS but echoed by the IAURIF team, were rejected. Indeed IAURIF began its technical assistance as a sub-contractor to the French designers of the ring road. Hence the road—rather than homogenous sectors or new settlements—was likely the Egyptian priority from the start.

The effects of the post-1952 order appear in other ways. For example, despite the best efforts of donors and their consultants, desert development manifests the exclusion of the *sha'b* characteristic of Cairo's formal growth, post-1952, more generally. Egyptian state agencies clearly preferred to build for upper-income clienteles. New Cairo and the other satellite developments backed by the new-communities authority have been at heart of the 1990s real-estate boom that led Cairo's desert periphery to be transformed into a series of gated communities for the Egyptian elite.<sup>155</sup> Bayat and Eric Denis' conclusion that they represent "a stark manifestation of the urban polarization and social cleavage present in Egyptian society today" is true in two respects.<sup>156</sup> Not only are the *sha'b* excluded by definition, such developments have been at the expense of donor-advocated desert development explicitly for middle to low-income Egyptians.

The previously noted state-society disconnect continues to be evident in these cases as well. For example, Egyptian officials rejected state-sponsored 'slum-building' and hence the prospect of engaging with those sectors of Egyptian society involved in informal urbanization and actually governing their efforts. Most notably, the free-standing new towns element of the desert-cities initiative was entirely divorced from Egypt's existing urban society—constituting a classic example of what Waterbury describes as Egyptian propensity "to treat knotty problems as insoluble and end-run them."<sup>157</sup>

Finally, the bureaucracy's reluctance to contemplate institutional reform persists throughout this chapter. Most of the projects considered here entailed proposals for

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<sup>155</sup> For discussions of this phenomenon, see Eric Denis (2006) "Cairo as Neo-Liberal Capital? From Walled City to Gated Communities" in Diane Singerman & Paul Amar eds., *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Middle East*. American University in Cairo Press: 47-71; Petra Kuppinger (2004) "Exclusive Greenery: New Gated Communities in Cairo," *City & Society*, 16, 2 (December): 35-62.

<sup>156</sup> Bayat & Denis (2000): 199.

<sup>157</sup> Waterbury (1983): 49.



the creation of centralized land-management and planning bodies, but to little evident effect. The unreconstructed bureaucracy's lack of capacity is evident in the difficulties experienced by the EMS team in locating potential sites, not unlike the Cairo governorate's inability to survey its land-holdings prior to the start of regularization (4.3.1B). IAURIF's dealings with GOPP also bear an interesting similarity to the AID and World Bank relationship with the EAJP. While some within GOPP may well have supported the donor strategy of creating a desert alternative to the informal sector, such views and the agency's close links to donor were balanced out by its lack of authority for implementation.<sup>158</sup> Having concluded that it lacked power and had no desire to connect to it, the IAURIF consultants—as in the previous chapters—realized that they should have worked with the governorates.<sup>159</sup>

## 5.6.2 THE POLITICS OF LAND SPECULATION

But the donor failure to reform the state's planning and land-management reform also reflects a new element specific to these cases: struggles, in part *within* the Egyptian state, over control of Cairo's desert periphery. Whereas western planners saw desert development as a practical alternative to informal urbanization because it could take place on public land, the El-Obour, EMS and IAURIF initiatives were—to varying degrees—undermined because land access was highly contested. From these cases, it is clear that a variety of state and parastatal elements were involved. A NUPS paper noted that “land associations and cooperatives as well as private individuals are vigorously acquiring land” for speculative purposes along most of the city's entrance ways.<sup>160</sup> The seizure of land by agricultural-development cooperatives—such as carried out by the ‘Urabi cooperative in El-Obour—was apparently not uncommon.<sup>161</sup>

But the most important and ruthless player in this game was the Egyptian military, which not only had extensive holdings in east Cairo, but had seen off earlier challenges to them<sup>162</sup> and was willing to seize such land as it desired.<sup>163</sup> Donors were well aware of its presence. A 1981 AID-backed consultancy study noted that the defence ministry occupied about 128 km<sup>2</sup> in Cairo, amounting to as much as *half* the metropolitan area.<sup>164</sup> Both NUPS and IAURIF commented on adverse effects

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<sup>158</sup> Concerning GOPP views, see Sakr (1990): 80.

<sup>159</sup> Interview, Marcel Belliot, 26 March 2001.

<sup>160</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1981a): 145.

<sup>161</sup> Jabr (1982): 26.

<sup>162</sup> Arandel & El Batran (1976): 20.

<sup>163</sup> Springborg (1989): 114.

<sup>164</sup> Dames & Moore (1981): 4-3; the original figure given was 30,000 feddan-s which equals 128 km<sup>2</sup> and then can be divided by the size of the metropolitan area (245 km<sup>2</sup>) according to the conservative definition found in Sims (2000): 2; for a graphic indication of military land holdings, see GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1982a): 4-11 [Figure 4.2].

that its land appropriation was having for the planning and development of east Cairo.<sup>165</sup>

While Sadat's desert-development strategy was portrayed as an attempt to break out of Egypt's confinement in the Nile valley, and is probably better understood as an exercise in devolving patronage—its satellite development efforts might further be understood as an attempt by Kafrawi to raid the defence ministry's land bank in the interests of development by his own ministry. A former GTZ consultant suggested this interpretation in the El-Obour case and two ex-IAURIF Cairo project managers subscribed to it with respect to the Scheme. If so, then perhaps Kafrawi hoped that the putative prestige of the German- and French-backed programmes would help overcome opposition from within the state, somewhat successfully in the case of the ring road but not in El-Obour or the IAURIF new settlements.

More broadly, these apparent attempts to unlock military-controlled land were both conceived during Sadat's tenure. They might be understood as efforts to limit the military's institutional power as part of his broader demilitarization of Egyptian society.<sup>166</sup> If so, then their subsequent failure could reflect Mubarak's later efforts to conciliate the Egyptian military establishment, allowing it to regain "much of the status and influence it had lost in the Sadat era."<sup>167</sup> Hence the balance-of-power under which these projects might have been more successful shifted with Sadat's assassination; they became casualties of the factional politics characteristic of patrimonial political orders. Along the same lines but more prosaically, Kafrawi's apparent land grab and its mixed results might be understood as simply part of routine bargaining and conflict with Abu Ghazala during the Sadat and Mubarak governments.<sup>168</sup>

Finally, the military's robust defence of its property portfolio is best understood in terms of its 'enclavization' as a 'state within the state' with extensive business interests (1.4.2B). Although high-standard military housing dates back to the Nasser period and was backed by Sadat "as a measure to secure the armed forces' political support," Abu Ghazala further expanded the defence ministry's housing programme in the 1980s so that all serving and retired professional soldiers were to have their own flats by 1986.<sup>169</sup> In the 1985-86 period 5 percent of all housing

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<sup>165</sup> PADCO, Inc et al. (1981a): vii [*Appendix III*]; GOPP/OTUI/IAURIF (1983): 4-8; GOPP/IAURIF (1986a): 1-2.

<sup>166</sup> Springborg (1989): 96-8.

<sup>167</sup> Springborg (1989): 98.

<sup>168</sup> While references to such a process are understandably scarce, see Maisa Y. Gamal (1992) "Egypt's Ministerial Elite: 1971-1981," PhD thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London: 186-7; Springborg (1989): 114.

<sup>169</sup> A.Y. Zohny (1988) *The Politics, Economics and Dynamics of Development Administration in Contemporary Egypt: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. Books on Africa: 200-202; Springborg (1989): 105.

constructed in Egypt was done by and for the military.<sup>170</sup> This development as well as the military's own ambitious desert-cities programme was to be funded by the sale of defence-ministry lands around Cairo and other large cities which were "now exceedingly valuable."<sup>171</sup> Moreover, the military also planned "sales of land in military cities to civilians who want to escape to the desert to avoid the trials and tribulations of life in the congested Nile Valley."<sup>172</sup>

Hence it had a role in the 1990s real estate boom as "military contractors" threw up "thousands of acres of apartments on the city's eastern perimeter to create new suburban enclaves for the officer elite."<sup>173</sup> More generally, such revenues—part of an undeclared military economy with a minimum value of \$1-2 billion in the early 1990s<sup>174</sup>—have allowed Egypt's armed forces to forge joint-venture "linkages with strategic elites" in the public and private sectors.<sup>175</sup> Thus it is not surprising that the military would want to rebuff challenges from Kafrawi and his external backers.

### 5.6.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR INFORMAL CAIRO

The failure of western efforts to replan Cairo provides probably the best indication of how the durability of informal urbanization is bound up in the workings of the post-1952 political order. Much in the way that a putatively modernist approach to urban development has ironically allowed Egyptian officialdom to ignore informal urbanization in Cairo, so their concern for the city's apparently uncontrollable growth provided the rationale for a development strategy more directly concerned with the political economy of construction.

By contrast, the donor-sponsored projects—whatever their faults—correctly assessed that redirecting Cairo's growth away from arable land required managing the demographic pressures that drove it. In particular, informal urbanization could not be stopped through coercion and top-down controls, but rather required that would-be informal homesteaders have an affordable alternative. To varying extents, all the projects under consideration reflect this realization. While none was a panacea or without costs, the satellite schemes targeted at lower-income consumers—suggested by the NUPS team and attempted in the EMS project and as part of the IAURIF Scheme—would have given state officials more options in managing the long-term growth of the capital. Some degree of accessible desert development for low- to medium-income Cairenes was a necessary prerequisite for transcending the bottom-line strategy of risk avoidance.

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<sup>170</sup> Springborg (1989): 105.

<sup>171</sup> *Al-Ahram* (22 October 1986): 1; Springborg (1989): 105.

<sup>172</sup> Springborg (1989): 105.

<sup>173</sup> Mitchell (1999): 456.

<sup>174</sup> Roy (1992): 705

<sup>175</sup> Henry & Springborg (2001): 151.

Such a redirection, however, did not happen. Not only did state officials have no desire to engage with such urbanization, the land needed to implement it was too valuable a spoil for the elites and their cronies, to be used on housing for the *sha'b*. Even if some officials did accept the donor strategy, the politics of land speculation meant that it was unlikely to be implemented. Hence the durability of informal Cairo is not simply a product of a resource-weak state or risk avoidance. Rather the logic of top-down exclusion and factional competition characteristic of the post-1952 political order mean that few resources are likely to be available to address its needs and manage its development. The elite monopolization of land in Cairo has foreclosed potential alternatives to the reproduction of informal urbanization. Hence risk avoidance and neglect are merely the path of least resistance for those who rule the city.

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## CHAPTER 6

### THE POLITICS OF WASTEWATER

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Somewhat more successfully, donors have also sought to upgrade Cairo's infrastructure and increase the Egyptian state's capacity to provide basic urban services. The most notable of these efforts has been the Greater Cairo Wastewater project (GCWWP), an approximately \$1.5-2 billion effort—led by the United States and the United Kingdom between 1978 and late 1990s—to refurbish and expand the city's wastewater network. "One of the largest environmental engineering projects in the world," the GCWWP was necessitated by widespread sewage flooding—a problem since the 1960s.—resulting from a lack of system expansion and maintenance.<sup>1</sup> Western aid agencies also justified their interventions on the grounds that Cairo's spectacular growth had not been accompanied by any systematic expansion of local sewer connections, leaving substantial portions of the city underserved. Almost by definition, such areas were often informal.

So while not explicitly targeted at informal Cairo, the GCWWP has had more of an impact on it than all the other donor-backed programmes considered so far. Besides ending the systemic sewage flooding which affected many informal and *shabi* areas, the GCWWP provided sanitary drainage to at least two million Cairenes—at least half of whom were in informal neighbourhoods. Hence unlike the other interventions considered in Part B of this thesis, the GCWWP is widely regarded as a success.<sup>2</sup>

Yet such big infrastructure projects are not without problems. Although AID provided local sewer connections on the west bank of the Nile, the GCWWP was mainly focused on backbone infrastructure. On the east bank, substantial areas continue to lack access. Moreover, donors have been sceptical that the city wastewater authority—the General Organization for Sanitary Drainage (GOSD)—is capable of meeting the demand for additional connections. They have attempted to address service deficits via participatory projects, but local government, national

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<sup>1</sup> ODA vol. 1: 16 [para 1.5].

<sup>2</sup> David Butter (1989) *Egypt: Remaking the Arab Connection*. Middle East Economic Digest: 36.

agencies and national politicians have been suspicious of these explicitly mobilizational initiatives or sought to appropriate them for their own purposes.

Moreover, the GCWWP's existing accomplishments may be difficult to sustain in the absence of institutional reform in GOSD and substantially increased cost recovery from wastewater producers. Although Cairo's continuing population growth was producing sewage flows in excess of system capacity by the end of the 1990s, AID is unlikely to provide further large-scale investments in the absence of policy reform. In effect, the Mubarak government has chosen to protect the existing beneficiaries of wastewater provision at the expense of those who would benefit from a further expansion of the system. In the longer term, GOSD's apparent inability to operate and maintain the completed system raises the possibility that its deterioration may resume.

So yet again, donors have failed to foster an administratively competent Egyptian state. Instead, they have built the Mubarak government a wastewater system which Egyptian state agencies are incapable of operating by themselves. As in previous chapters, the logic of neglectful rule is evident, particularly in Egyptian resistance to policy reform and the more equitable distribution of wastewater service. The workings of the post-1952 order are even more directly apparent in the failure of a donor-backed participatory project in south Cairo.

This final case-study chapter begins with a brief background section outlining the sanitary drainage crises that necessitated donor intervention in the Cairo sewerage sector (6.1). Then comes a discussion of the GCWWP itself, the implementation process and its accomplishments (6.2). The chapter next turns to its problematics of access and sustainability, paying particular attention to donor demands for policy reform and Egyptian resistance to them (6.3). The penultimate section looks at a number of participatory projects, particularly an abortive British-backed initiative in South Cairo (6.4). The chapter concludes with a comparative section, explicitly linking the examination of wastewater to the themes emerging from the previous case-study chapters (6.5).

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## 6.1 'A STATE OF MAXIMUM EMERGENCY'

The original British-built wastewater system was completed on the east bank of the Nile in 1914 and was designed to serve Cairo's projected 1932 population of 650,000.<sup>3</sup> Although connection levels were lower in the city's older and less affluent

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<sup>3</sup> AID (1978a) "Project Paper - Egypt: Cairo Sewerage [UNCLASSIFIED] (25 September): 7 [para 2.08].

quarters, the introduction of sanitary drainage likely led to declining mortality rates and hence the city's rapid growth thereafter. By 1927, Cairo's actual population exceeded 1 million.<sup>4</sup> But though the network was subsequently expanded to accommodate the east bank's increasing discharges,<sup>5</sup> few of the works after 1952 increased its overall capacity.<sup>6</sup> Rather they were palliative, aimed at easing bottlenecks in specific areas and preventing sewage flooding. In the view of one expatriate specialist, they ultimately resulted "in conglomeration of works which nobody truly understands" and which tended to convey the sewage around in circles.<sup>7</sup> A similar structural shortfall was evident on the west bank. The first wastewater network was completed in 1939, probably to serve a population of less than 100,000.<sup>8</sup> By the mid-1960s, however, it had close to 1.5 million inhabitants.

So by the mid 1970s when donors began to take an interest in Cairo's problems, the city's wastewater network—nominally capable of serving 2 million—had not received the necessary investments to convey, let alone treat, the flows produced by the approximately 5 million supposedly connected to it.<sup>9</sup> Such shortfalls were further worsened by siltation in the pipes and "poor operation and maintenance practices" which severely reduced the system's existing capacity over time.<sup>10</sup>

### 6.1.1 'THE CITY OF GIZA HAS BEEN SHAFTED—IT'S A SHIT HOLE'

As a consequence of this shortfall, sewage floods had become a common occurrence by 1960.<sup>11</sup> Although in 1965 Nasser ordered the so-called "One Hundred Days" scheme of emergency repairs, its most significant element was the construction of an under-the-Nile siphon which transferred flows from the

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<sup>4</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 174 [Table 5], 176 [Chart II]; D.G.M. Roberts & E.W. Flaxman (1985) "Greater Cairo Wastewater Project: History, Development and Management Philosophy," *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers*, 78, Part 1: Design and Construction: 718 [para 23].

<sup>5</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 128, 226; Roberts & Flaxman (1985): 717-8 [paras 22-6].

<sup>6</sup> AID (1978a): 8 [para 2.19].

<sup>7</sup> Interview, G. Martin Wishart AMBRIC Project Director, Cairo, 11 May 1998.

<sup>8</sup> AID (1978a): 7 [para 2.13].

<sup>9</sup> Mounir S. Neamatalla (1984) "Urban Service Delivery" in *The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo*. The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Proceedings of Seminar Nine in the Series 'Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World', Held in Cairo, Egypt (November 11-15, 1984): 166; see also, AID (1983) "Annex F: Water and Wastewater Sector—Status, Constraints and Strategy," 1985 CDSS Annex: Egypt: 1 [para 1.01].

<sup>10</sup> AID (1978a): 16 [para 4.01]; see also: 9 [para 2.22]; T.D. Hall & M.W. Gray (1985) "Greater Cairo Wastewater Project Rehabilitation Works," *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers*, 78, Part 1: Design and Construction: 766 [para 4].

<sup>11</sup> Joint Housing and Community Upgrading Team (1977): 32.

southern districts of the Cairo governorate to the west bank.<sup>12</sup> As will soon become clear, this was essentially the Cairo governorate dumping its problems on Giza. Moreover, such measures were to little avail as sewage flooding had resumed by the end of the decade.<sup>13</sup>

According to a 1983 AID paper, there were sometimes as many as 500 incidents of sewage flooding per day.<sup>14</sup> The city wastewater authority—subsequently renamed GOSD—lacked the capability to deal with them.<sup>15</sup> A 1981 study had identified 145 flooding locations<sup>16</sup> including 67 extended areas suffering from “chronic flooding,” meaning that they never dried out.<sup>17</sup> These were often in lower-income and informal areas. Not surprisingly, such flooding contributed to a “steadily deteriorating standard of living,” and had extremely negative consequences for public health.<sup>18</sup> They included some of the highest hepatitis and enteric disease rates in the region—the latter contributing to Egypt’s overall high level of infant mortality—as well as cholera outbreaks.<sup>19</sup>

Still, such factors were not the only reasons why the US government embarked on a project the size of the GCWWP. Wastewater was also a security issue.<sup>20</sup> A 1982 AID wastewater-strategy paper linked the Mubarak government’s engagement with the issue to rioting earlier that year, probably referring to an incident in Cairo’s Misr al-Qadima district. Official indifference to a burst sewer led residents to stone trains on a nearby rail-line in order to attract notice.<sup>21</sup> More generally, an earlier AID paper seemed to link the January 1977 riots to the urban poor’s declining standard of living which might be reversed by the end of sewage flooding.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Egyptian Gazette* “Sabry to Open ‘100 Days Project’ on Cairo Drainage,” (18 July 1966): 2; see also, Roberts & Flaxman (1985): 718 [paras 27 & 28].

<sup>13</sup> El Kadi (1992): 17; Joint Housing and Community Upgrading Team (1977): 32.

<sup>14</sup> AID (1983): 1 [para 1.01], 9 [para 2.10].

<sup>15</sup> AID (1978a): 8 [para 2.18], 21 [para 4.24]; EQI (1988) “Evaluation of Cairo Sewerage I Rehabilitation,” presented to United States Agency for International Development (February): 19.

<sup>16</sup> ASCG, Inc (1992) “Cairo Sewerage II West Bank: 1991 Interim Evaluation Summary Report,” submitted to US Agency for International Development (19 March): 57.

<sup>17</sup> AMBRIC [American British Consultants] (1981) “Pre-design Reports: General Summary of Drainage Areas and Proposals,” quoted in EQI (1988): 6.

<sup>18</sup> AID (1982) “Water and Wastewater Sector Strategy Paper” internal mission document: 1; see also AID (1978): 14 [para 3.01], 44 [para 8.08], 37 [para 5.41]; AID (1984) “Project Paper: Cairo Sewerage II,” (5 August): 5 [para 2.01], 57-63; (1983): 9 [para 2.13].

<sup>19</sup> AID (n.d.) “Cairo Sewerage Project: Embaba Unsewered Area,” typescript handout: 1; (1978a): 37 [para 5.41].

<sup>20</sup> Zimmerman (1993): 88, 110 [note 74].

<sup>21</sup> AID (1982): 1; Richard Lobban ed. (1983) “Urban Research Strategies for Egypt,” *Cairo Papers in Social Science* 6, 2 (June): 15.

<sup>22</sup> AID (1978): 44-5.



Indeed, donors worried that Cairo's chronic wastewater problems had an even greater potential to disrupt everyday life throughout the city. For example, in early December 1982, a pumping station in Giza—through which *all* west-bank and a large amount of east-bank wastewater flowed<sup>23</sup>—was put out of commission by a burst pipe.<sup>24</sup> This cut-off led to severe flooding in low-lying portions of those west-bank neighbourhoods connected to the system.<sup>25</sup> In order to stop wastewater flows so as to begin repairs to the station, the Giza governorate was forced to order periodic water cut-offs throughout the west bank for two weeks;<sup>26</sup> there were similar stoppages in those east-bank areas whose sewage was siphoned into Giza.<sup>27</sup>

Fortunately for Cairenes, the pumping station failure took place in winter. Still, the combination of sewage flooding and curtailment of the potable water supply “had all the ingredients of a major public health disaster.”<sup>28</sup> While reporting of the incident in the semi-official press likely attempted to minimise the severity of the water cut-offs, it is nonetheless clear that they thoroughly degraded urban life in Giza. The cut-offs also severely disrupted essential services such as bakeries, which curtailed bread production for lack of water.<sup>29</sup>

Still, the incident did receive considerable coverage including regular progress reports in the press and on television.<sup>30</sup> Its high visibility was reinforced by visits of the president, prime minister and Kafrawi (whose portfolio then included utilities) in the first week of flooding.<sup>31</sup> The pumping station failure was also discussed in the housing committee of the Maglis al-Sha'b. Members representing the Doqqi neighbourhood—where the pumping station was located—denounced the conveyance of east-bank sewage to the west bank and the Cairo's governorate's control of GOSD more generally. One melodramatically proclaimed that “the city

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<sup>23</sup> AID (1984): 19 [para 4.02]; ASG, Inc. (1992): 11.

<sup>24</sup> 'Adil Ibrahim (1982b) “When will the water return to the houses of Giza?” (in Arabic) *al-Ahram*, No. 35,059 (8 December): 6.

<sup>25</sup> 'Adil Ibrahim (1982a) “Next Friday ends the hardship of Doqqi and 'Aguza and Muhandisin with the explosion of the sewage works” (in Arabic) *al-Ahram*, No. 35,056 (5 December): 6.

<sup>26</sup> The beginning of water stoppages was announced in *al-Ahram* (1982b) “The Water is Cut from Giza Six Nights from Saturday” (in Arabic) No. 35,054 (3 December): 6; and the end in *al-Ahram* (1982i) “Return of Water to Giza from Today” (in Arabic) No. 35,068 (17 December): 1.

<sup>27</sup> *Al-Ahram* (1982f) “The return of water to Ma'adi Immediately After the Repair of the Giza Pipe” (in Arabic) No. 35,065 (14 December): 8.

<sup>28</sup> AID (1984): 34 [para 5.04].

<sup>29</sup> Ibrahim (1982b): 6; Muhammad Mu'awwad et al. (1982) “It is Necessary to Confront the Sewage Problem Practically and Speedily Before it Becomes a Catastrophe” (in Arabic) *al-Ahram*, No. 35,066 (12 December): 2.

<sup>30</sup> Concerning the latter, see *al-Ahram* (1982c) “Television Coverage Every Four Hours of the Giza Sewerage Repairs” (in Arabic) No. 35,060 (9 December): 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibrahim (1982b): 6; *al-Ahram*, (1982d) “Drinking water flow in Giza stopped for seven hours daily” (in Arabic) No. 35,061 (10 December): 1; concerning Mubarak's visit, see, ODA (1994) vol. 2: 28 [para B3.6.14]; Roberts & Flaxman (1985): 720-1 [para 40].

of Giza has been shafted—it's a shit hole."<sup>32</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly in the context of such publicity and complaints, press reports often mentioned the billions of the Egyptian pounds—and the foreign assistance—which the government was ostensibly planning to invest in order to bring a "final" end to Cairo's drainage problems.<sup>33</sup>

In the short term, the national and Giza governorate authorities did cope reasonably well, declaring a "state of maximum emergency"<sup>34</sup> and managing to restart the pumping station<sup>35</sup> after over two weeks of "herculean efforts."<sup>36</sup> In dealing with the effects of the flooding and water shut-off, they were assisted by the military—perhaps at the initiative of the irrepressible Abu Ghazala who was also seeking to expand its role in the country's public life.<sup>37</sup>

While the flooding and water cut-offs do not seem to have led to any civil unrest, still it would have not been hard for both donors and Egyptian government officials to imagine the potentially negative consequences of bread shortages for public order.<sup>38</sup> Rioting aside, the combination of large-scale sewage flooding, protracted water scarcity, the collapse of dependent services and outbreaks of epidemic disease could have made urban Giza uninhabitable for its then approximately 3 million residents.

### 6.1.2 THE SERVICING DEFICIT

Another concern for donors—albeit of secondary importance to sewage flooding—was that substantial portions of the city were not even connected to the wastewater system (see Map 6.1). Just as they had failed to expand the primary network, so too were Egyptian governments unable to construct secondary sewers to keep up with

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<sup>32</sup> Mu'awwad et al. (1982): 2; see also, Mu'awwad (1983): 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Al-Ahram* (1983) "491/2 Million Pounds for Sanitary Drainage in 6 Months" (in Arabic) No. 35,086 (4 January): 1; (1982e) "5 New Stations in Cairo During 18 Months" (in Arabic) No. 35,063 (12 December): 1; (1982h) "3495 Million Pounds to Implement Sanitary Drainage Projects in Five Years" (in Arabic) No. 35,069 (18 December): 1; Mu'awwad et al. (1982): 2.

<sup>34</sup> Ibrahim (1982a): 6.

<sup>35</sup> *Al-Ahram* (1982g) "After Tomorrow the Giza Sewer Station is Repaired" (in Arabic) No. 35,066 (15 December): 8; (1982h) "Tomorrow Ends the Problem of the Water Cut-off in Giza, Vehicles to Drain Sewage From the Streets" (in Arabic) No. 35,067 (16 December): 8; see also, 'Adil Ibrahim (1982c) "Saga of the Water Cut-off Extends until the Coming Thursday.. Why?" (in Arabic) *al-Ahram*, No. 35,062 (11 December): 3.

<sup>36</sup> Roberts & Flaxman (1985): 720 (para 40).

<sup>37</sup> Concerning the military role, see *al-Ahram* (1982e); (1982h); concerning Abu Ghazala's efforts more generally, see Springborg (1989): 98-104.

<sup>38</sup> An 8 December feature in *al-Ahram* reported that the prime minister, had received "complaints" from water-deprived Giza residents; see Ibrahim (1982b): 6; but an 11 December article there noted that "the masses" were "suffering the water cut-off in silence"; see Ibrahim (1982c): 3.

Cairo's growth rates especially in informal neighbourhoods.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, in response to capacity shortfalls in the primary network, governments periodically tried to prohibit new connections—although the steady increase in wastewater flows suggests that such measures were ultimately ineffective.<sup>40</sup>

While quantifying the extent of deprivation prior to the start of the GCWWP is difficult, donor-commissioned research suggested that informal Cairo was extremely underserved (see 2.4.4B). Although some informal areas did receive secondary sewerage—whether by accessing official patronage networks, paying bribes or undertaking self-help measures—such unplanned provision may have exacerbated flooding in some areas by increasing the load placed on already overburdened local collectors.<sup>41</sup>

## 6.2 “ONE OF THE EPICS OF AID-FINANCED CONSTRUCTION”<sup>42</sup>

The impetus for the GCWWP came in January 1978, when the Egyptian government requested US assistance in implementing a British-drafted wastewater master plan for Cairo.<sup>43</sup> AID, however, rejected the request on the grounds that it over-emphasized new construction; did not include the cleaning and renovation of the existing system; and would hence not begin to relieve Cairo's wastewater problems until the early to mid-1980s.<sup>44</sup> In September 1978, AID proposed its own preliminary project to reduce sewage flooding, initially consisting of the cleaning and repair of blocked and damaged tunnels.<sup>45</sup> Its emphasis in the initial years of the project was on construction projects maximising flood relief and increasing the area served, rather than expensive and time-consuming investments in such facilities as new wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs).<sup>46</sup>

The GCWWP, however, was not a strictly American endeavour. The British Overseas Development Ministry—subsequently the Overseas Development Administration (ODA)—provided the initial funding for the east-bank works

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<sup>39</sup> Interview, Mustapha al-Hefnawi, 6 May 1998; see also, Hall & Gray (1985): 767 [para 9]; Taher (1986): 45-6.

<sup>40</sup> Ikram (1980): 157.

<sup>41</sup> With respect to such connection efforts, see Deboulet (1994): 387; GOPP/IAURIF (1988d): 13 [*Action Project: Rationalization of Urban Development on Agricultural Land*]; Nadim (1980): 115-16; Taher (1986): 47-51; concerning the resulting flooding, see Deboulet (1994): 388; Oldham et al. (1987): 60.

<sup>42</sup> Butter (1989): 36.

<sup>43</sup> AID (1978a): 1-2.

<sup>44</sup> AID (1978a): 2, 17.

<sup>45</sup> AID (1978a): 18-19; see also AID (1984): 2.

<sup>46</sup> AID (1982): 1, 3.

proposed in the original master plan.<sup>47</sup> In part because of the British and American desire that their aid funds go to their own national contractors, they undertook the GCWWP as separate east- and west-bank networks with AID working exclusively on the western side following the completion of its preliminary intervention to reduce flooding throughout the city.<sup>48</sup> Nonetheless, from December 1979 onward work on both banks took place within an integrated management structure, a contractor consortium known as American British Consultants (AMBRIC).<sup>49</sup>

### 6.2.1 AID ON THE WEST BANK

Whatever its initial reservations, AID became the largest single GCWWP donor, spending \$900 million on the project overall.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, the GCWWP constitutes the agency's largest project worldwide and was approximately equal to its development spending in 40 Sub-Saharan African countries in 1991.<sup>51</sup> Because of the relative absence of usable pre-existing infrastructure and AID's willingness to fund the works out of ESF aid without a substantial Egyptian contribution, its expansion of the Giza governorate network was the more straight-forward side of the GCWWP. It took the form of three discrete drainage systems—put in place between 1985 and 1996—that served areas such as Munira and Bulaq al-Dakrur (see Map 6.1). Overall, they increased the wastewater network's catchment area by 80 percent.<sup>52</sup>

Quite apart from the scale of the infrastructure deficits on the west bank, substantial spending on Cairo wastewater may be explained by AID's need to allocate funds that would have otherwise languished in the aid pipeline. Its officials have acknowledged that wastewater projects in Egypt served to absorb undisbursed funds from other less successful projects.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps this also helps explain AID's decision, around 1984, to construct a new WWTP—in addition to the rehabilitation of an existing plant on the outskirts of Bulaq al-Dakrur—despite its initial apparent unwillingness to fund new treatment works.<sup>54</sup> The plant had been explicitly requested by Mubarak and Kafrawi.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> ODA (1994) vol. 1: 19 [*para 2.2*].

<sup>48</sup> AID (1978a): 3 & Annex F.

<sup>49</sup> AMBRIC (1995) "Greater Cairo Wastewater Project: Review Statement - Second Quarter 1995," Ministry of Housing and Utilities: 3.

<sup>50</sup> AID (n.d.): 2.

<sup>51</sup> Lieberson (1994): 16.

<sup>52</sup> ASCG, Inc. (1992): 2.

<sup>53</sup> Taher (1997a): 226.

<sup>54</sup> Concerning the WWTP, see AID (1984): 24-9; concerning its earlier intention not to fund such works, see AID (1983): 4 [*para 1.16*]; (1982): 3.

<sup>55</sup> AID (1984): 26 [*para 4.14*].

## 6.2.2 EAST-BANK WORKS

Because of the long history of poorly planned and executed system expansions, the situation was considerably more complicated in the Cairo governorate. Rebuilding the network from scratch was impossible in the crowded urban environment. Instead, the master plan had recommended the construction of a “deep spine tunnel”<sup>56</sup>—of which AID had been very sceptical—intercepting the existing network at various points, through which wastewater would be moved to a very large new WWTP.<sup>57</sup>

But as ODA was unable to provide comparable resources—its funding amounted to only £66 million in the end<sup>58</sup>—so these works required a substantial Egyptian contribution.<sup>59</sup> While the precise details are somewhat murky, Egyptian hard-currency shortages combined with administrative delays, cost over-runs and technical problems meant that the initial UK grant was insufficient to complete the spine tunnel.<sup>60</sup> So £251 million of credits had to be secured, with UK backing, from commercial lenders. Subsequent loans from the Italian government and the European Investment Bank financed work on the WWTP and further expansion of the primary network.<sup>61</sup>

## 6.2.3 ACHIEVEMENTS

Nonetheless, the GCWWP had relatively few planning and implementation problems compared with other urban-development projects examined in this thesis. In part, this is probably because it did not entail, at least at the outset, policy reform or the engagement of Egyptian society as part of the intervention. As should be clear from the previous section, the GCWWP was just a big conventional infrastructure project.<sup>62</sup> It thus avoided those elements that had precipitated Egyptian government opposition to other donor interventions.

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<sup>56</sup> A.D.K. Kell et al. (1993) “Project Objectives, Organization and Implementation,” *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers*, Special Issue: Greater Cairo Wastewater Project: 11 [para 29a].

<sup>57</sup> Kell et al. (1993): 11-12; I.P. Taylor et al. (1993) “Gabal el Asfar Treatment Plant,” *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers*, Special Issue: Greater Cairo Wastewater Project: 48-55; for a concise overview of east-bank works, see ODA (1994) vol 1: 16-7 [para 1.7].

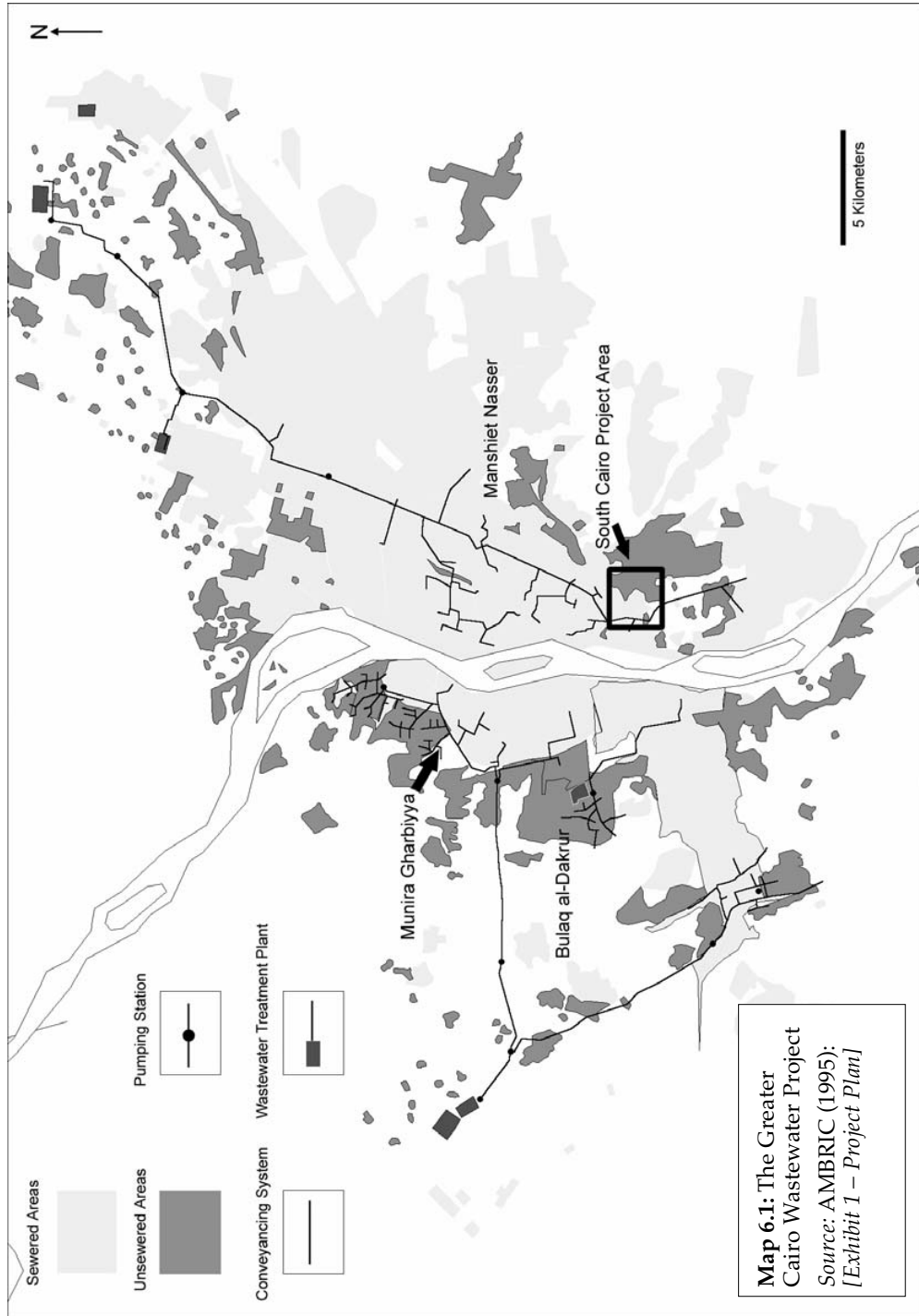
<sup>58</sup> ODA (1994) vol. 1: 31 [paras 3.7 & 3.8].

<sup>59</sup> Interview, G. Martin Wishart, 11 May 1998; to get a sense of the complexities of GCWWP accounting, which also complicate any attempt to calculate its overall value, see AMBRIC (1998) “Monthly Program Report,” submitted to CWO (April): 56 [Table 7.5 – “Whole Project Fund Utilization (April 98)"]; (1995): 22 [Exhibit 14].

<sup>60</sup> Butter (1989): 36-7; ODA (1994) vol. 1: 29-30.

<sup>61</sup> AMBRIC (1995): 21; Kell et al. (1993): 9 [para 16], 17 [para 53]; see also European Investment Bank (1996) “Egypt: EIB lends 90 million for improving the urban environment in Cairo,” (18 July), <http://eib.eu.int/pub/press/1996/prpa1696.htm>, 7 February 2001.

<sup>62</sup> ODA (1994) vol. 1: 8 [para 11], 31 [para 3.7], 32 [para 3.11].



## A. FLOOD CONTROL

In keeping with the original donor objective of forestalling potential wastewater crises, one of the GCWWP's main accomplishments was the end of large-scale<sup>63</sup> sewage flooding by 1986—following the completion of AID's initial cleaning and rehabilitation project.<sup>64</sup> By 1987, the number of areas suffering from chronic sewage floods on both banks had been reduced by over 80 percent to 11.<sup>65</sup> After the spine tunnel entered into service in January 1992, GOSD reported substantial flooding reductions in northern areas of the east bank.<sup>66</sup> Such improvements in drainage further allowed AID to begin work on expanding the east bank's water distribution system.<sup>67</sup>

## B. EXTENSION OF SERVICE

At least on the west bank, AID wanted to ensure that underserved communities were connected to the backbone infrastructure it funded (if only to ensure that the new system had sufficient sewage flows to function).<sup>68</sup> Probably because the Egyptian government lacked the resources, capacity and perhaps the motivation to provide such servicing, AID decided in the mid-1980s to include a large local-connections project—known as the Fixed Amount Reimbursable (FAR) programme—in its intervention. Through 1996, the agency funded 475 km of local sewers and 561,000 connections—largely in informal areas such as Bulaq al-Dakrur and Munira—serving around two million people at a cost of \$140 million.<sup>69</sup> While the overall project agreement within which FAR was included explicitly stipulated that local connections not be provided exclusively on the ability to pay,<sup>70</sup> nonetheless individual home-owners have been charged for connections.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Site-specific flooding, however, persists in some areas; for examples, see Bakr (1993); EQI (1987): 6-11.

<sup>64</sup> AID (n.d.): 1.

<sup>65</sup> EQI (1988): 6-11

<sup>66</sup> Kell et al. (1993): 14 [*para 45*]; ODA (1994) vol. 1: 35 [*para 4.1*]; see also, M.M. Hassan et al. (1996) "Impact of Improved Sewerage Systems on Groundwater Heads in Eastern Cairo Region," *Water Science Technology*, 32, 11: 171-7.

<sup>67</sup> AID (1988) "Project Paper: Cairo Water Supply II" [UNCLASSIFIED] (25 September): vii.

<sup>68</sup> AID (1982): 6.

<sup>69</sup> AID (n.d.): 1; AMBRIC (1995): 20; G.R. Miller & R.J. Kachinsky (1993) "West Bank Scheme," *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers, Special Issue: Greater Cairo Wastewater Project*: 58 [*para 13*].

<sup>70</sup> ASCG, Inc (1992): 7; AID (1984): 79.

<sup>71</sup> Interview, Wafaa S. Faltaous Project Officer, Office of Environment and Infrastructure, AID Cairo mission, Cairo, 30 March 1998.

### C. INSTITUTIONAL REFORM?

Western intervention in the Cairo wastewater sector was accompanied by its reconfiguration. As in some of the previous case studies, the Egyptian government created an agency—the Cairo Wastewater Organization (CWO)—to work with the donors and streamline project implementation.<sup>72</sup> While CWO is sometimes represented as another GCWWP success, the truth of this claim is uncertain.<sup>73</sup> Heavily reliant on AMBRIC for technical expertise, it has had relatively little substantive involvement in the GCWWP<sup>74</sup> and has been mainly concerned with the politically important task of contracting.<sup>75</sup> Tellingly, in light of previous experience, operational control of the wastewater network has remained the responsibility of the GOSD—ultimately controlled by the Cairo governorate—which had little role in the project at the outset.

#### 6.2.4 THE CURIOUS CASE OF EGYCON

Although Arab Contractors was a major GCWWP subcontractor, the project manifests few obvious signs of the political-economy of construction.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps because it was obviously important, highly visible and generally compatible with the objectives of the Sadat and Mubarak governments, it was less a target for rent-seeking. A possible exception to this generalization, however, is the curious case of EGYCON, an Egyptian engineering consortium to which AMBRIC had subcontracted some of its construction-management responsibilities.<sup>77</sup>

In a series of articles beginning in late 1985, the Wafd-party newspaper accused EGYCON's founder—a Yemeni *émigré* named 'Abd al-Rahman al-Baydani—of illegally appropriating project funds and generally disrupting project implementation.<sup>78</sup> In October 1986, the paper's vendetta against him took a curious turn, as Springborg recounted in his discussion of the scandal:

[Baydani] retaliated by offering the editor of that paper [*al-Wafd*] a £LE100,000 bribe to terminate the campaign. As the money was changing

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<sup>72</sup> ODA (1994) vol. 2: 40 [*para C2.3*].

<sup>73</sup> For example, see AID (1984): 3 [*para 1.05*]; George Kinias et al. (2000) "Greater Cairo Wastewater (CWO) Management Assessment and Future Mission Options and Recommendations," prepared for the United States Agency for International Development under Contract #HNE-C-00-96-90027-00, Development Alternatives, Inc. (May): iii;

<sup>74</sup> AID (1984): 9 [*para 2.09*]; (1983): 19-20, 22 [*para 3.41*].

<sup>75</sup> ASCG, Inc (1992): 75.

<sup>76</sup> For examples of their participation, see AMBRIC 1995: 16 [*Exhibit 11*]; Kell et al. (1993): 15 [*Figure 5*]; Flint et al. (1993): 20 [*Table 1 & inset box*].

<sup>77</sup> AID/RIG/A (1987) "Audit of Cairo Sewerage II," USAID/Egypt Project No 263-0173. Audit Report No. 6-263-87-13 (30 September): 3.

<sup>78</sup> Majdi Sarhan (1986) "The Story of al-Baydani and the Wafd" (in Arabic) *al-Wafd* (16 October): 3-4; the discussion of *al-Wafd*'s reportage here is drawn from this article.



hands the police, tipped off by [Baydani], seized the editor and charged him with blackmail.<sup>79</sup>

The editor was cleared in court in June 1987 with Baydani and his accomplices then being placed under investigation.<sup>80</sup>

But not only were the accusations somewhat vague, an AID audit report seems to cast doubt on them. Apparently in late 1985 or early 1986, CWO first asked AMBRIC to terminate its relationship with EGYCON—not in September 1986 as claimed in *al-Wafd*. AMBRIC was reluctant to do so, according to the report, because “the subcontractor’s technical services were satisfactory, and there was no legal basis for subcontract termination.”<sup>81</sup> AMBRIC’s refusal led to a gradual cut-off of Egyptian payments to AMBRIC from April 1986 through March 1987 which meant that there was no money for AMBRIC to pay EGYCON. These tactics led EGYCON to withdraw its services and it was terminated from the project in May of that year.<sup>82</sup> It then filed a number of legal actions, some of which were still in the Egyptian courts as of 1996.<sup>83</sup>

The circumstances behind EGYCON’s termination remain opaque. The conflict with CWO may have been linked to east-bank implementation problems and turmoil within the organization itself. An ODA evaluation of the GCWWP refers to the 1987-88 period, somewhat elliptically, “as being one of the most difficult in the project’s history” and notes a high turnover among CWO senior staff.<sup>84</sup> An admittedly more speculative and conspiratorial interpretation of EGYCON’s demise is suggested by the fact that it was replaced by two Egyptian contracting firms—one of which was Moharram-Bakhom.<sup>85</sup> The latter’s principal member, Ahmad Muharram, has been closely linked with Arab Contractors: “virtually a member of Osman’s family, and his engineering consulting office would depend largely on the Arab Contractors for business.”<sup>86</sup> The fact that some CWO staff may have been on secondment from Arab Contractors in the mid-1980s might help explain the subsequent selection of Moharram-Bakhom—if not the original CWO animus towards EGYCON. While EGYCON’s termination evidently did not seriously obstruct the GCWWP’s implementation, the case suggests that the project was not without an element of rent-seeking, however subterranean.

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<sup>79</sup> Springborg (1989): 83.

<sup>80</sup> Springborg (1989): 253 [*fn.* 152].

<sup>81</sup> AID/RIG/A (1987): 3.

<sup>82</sup> AID/RIG/A (1987): 3-4.

<sup>83</sup> AMBRIC (1995): 3.

<sup>84</sup> ODA (1994) vol. 2: 48 [*para* C2.6.7].

<sup>85</sup> AMBRIC (1995): 3.

<sup>86</sup> Moore (1994): 124, 174.

## 6.3 PROBLEMATICS

While the GCWWP's implementation was relatively straightforward and its achievements are undeniable, nonetheless the project was not unproblematic. Not only was the distribution of servicing extremely uneven, the project's sustainability was threatened by Cairo's continual growth and, more fundamentally, the Mubarak government's reluctance to assume the O&M burdens entailed in the new works. The latter would have required increasing cost-recovery from wastewater producers and decreasing the subsidization of sewerage provision.

### 6.3.1 EAST-BANK SERVICING

The GCWWP works in the Cairo governorate lacked an FAR programme equivalent. Hence local access to project infrastructure has been more problematic (the context for the South Cairo Poverty Alleviation project to be discussed in 6.4.).

In part, the absence of a local-connections element was because 85 percent of the east bank was reportedly sewered at the start of the project, a legacy of the original British-built system.<sup>87</sup> However this figure was likely exaggerated, as coverage levels only reached 70 percent in the 1990s.<sup>88</sup> Some informal areas saw "little or no improvement to their local sewerage system as a result of this project, nor are they likely to do so in the near future."<sup>89</sup> Hence the absence of a local-connections programme also reflected the financial constraints of the east-bank GCWWP: for example, funds intended to connect extremely underserved informal areas in south Cairo were diverted to other parts of the project.<sup>90</sup> While GOSD is nominally responsible for service provision, donor and AMBRIC officials have been privately sceptical that it is able to do so.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> ODA (1994) vol. 1: 11 [*para 25*].

<sup>88</sup> Ahmad Gaber (1997) "Overview of Egypt's Water & Wastewater Sector," handout provided by AID/Cairo (23 December): 7; apart from census data, it is somewhat difficult to determine connection levels in particular locales, a conclusion derived from a consultancy paper provided in confidence and Interview, Waguih I. Shuwky, consulting engineer, Arab Consulting Engineers (Moharram-Bakhoum), Cairo, 14 May 1998.

<sup>89</sup> ODA (1994) vol. 1: 58 [*para 4.79*]; for examples, see Roy Steven Nakashima et al. (2004) "Making Cities Work: The Greater Cairo Healthy Neighborhood Program—An Urban Environmental Health Initiative in Egypt," Activity Report 142, prepared for USAID Mission to Egypt under a grant from the USAID/EGAT Urban Programs "Making Cities Work," EHP Project 26568/UH.Egypt.MCW (September): xiv-xv; Tadros (1996a): 14; Wilbur Smith Associates et al. (1989): 5, A6.

<sup>90</sup> ODA (1994) vol. 2: 16 [*para B3.3.3*].

<sup>91</sup> See also AID (1983): 19-20 [*para 3.29*]; AMBRIC (1991) "Greater Cairo Wastewater Project: System Load Review," vol. 1 "Report," Ministry of Reconstruction, New Communities, Housing and Utilities, Organization for the Execution of the Greater Cairo Wastewater Project (February): 19-20; Ernst & Young (1994): iv.

### 6.3.2 SYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY?

Even before the completion of most east- and west-bank works, AMBRIC was preparing reports—at the request of CWO—which claimed that new capital commitments of between \$1-2.5 billion were needed.<sup>92</sup> They concluded that that the infrastructure on both banks would be operating at capacity by 1995-97, only a few years after they had come into service.<sup>93</sup> The problem was particularly acute on the west bank, where continuing high levels of informal growth<sup>94</sup> meant that a substantial increase in wastewater treatment and pumping capacity was ostensibly needed.<sup>95</sup>

AMBRIC and CWO doubtless concentrated on the west bank, because they realised that further grant funding for new works would only be available from AID. Problematically, the reports assumed (in part) that unsewered areas would continue to be connected to the GCWWP-provided network at rates approximating those of the city's growth.<sup>96</sup> As noted above, however, GOSD probably did not have the capacity to do this on the east bank. On the west bank, such connection levels depended on the continuation of the FAR programme—which was itself contingent on further AID funding.

So while Cairo's growth was unlikely to overload the GCWWP-works in the near term, such projections nonetheless indicated that without further donor investment in primary and secondary infrastructure, its continued growth was likely to undermine the GCWWP's achievement of providing service to the unsewered. For example, by 1995 some 72-75 percent of the west-bank population was expected to receive service.<sup>97</sup> Without further expansion, however, the percentage would drop to 58 percent by 2010 because of population growth in unconnected outlying neighbourhoods.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> AMBRIC (1993) "Greater Cairo Wastewater Project – West Bank Project: West Bank Strategic Plan - Final Report," Ministry of Reconstruction, New Communities, Housing and Utilities (October): 8-3 – 8-8; (1991) npn [*Executive Summary*].

<sup>93</sup> AMBRIC (1991): 40-56.

<sup>94</sup> AMBRIC (1991): 24, 33-8.

<sup>95</sup> AMBRIC (1993): 4-3.

<sup>96</sup> AMBRIC (1991): 35 [*Table 3-2*]; see also (1993): 2-12 [*Figure 2.2*], 3-12 – 3-14 [*Figures 3.3 - 3.5*].

<sup>97</sup> AMBRIC (1993): 3-20.

<sup>98</sup> AMBRIC (1993): 3-20; for likely confirmation of AMBRIC's projections, see A. El-Hefnawi & M.F. Aref (2004) "An Overview of the Water Supply and Sanitation System at Metropolitan and Peri-Urban Level: The Case of Greater Cairo Region," case study paper of the Service Provision Governance in the Peri-urban Interface of Metropolitan Areas Research Project, Peri-urban Research Project Team, Development Planning Unit, University College London: 37-9 [[http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/pui/research/current/governance/outputs/Cairo\\_Report2\\_1%20Full.zip](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/pui/research/current/governance/outputs/Cairo_Report2_1%20Full.zip), 31 October 2006]; Ayman El Hefnawi and Hanaa El Gohary (2004) "WSS Practices and Living Conditions in the Peri-Urban Interface of Metropolitan Cairo: The Cases of Abu El Numrous and Abu El Gheitt," case study paper of the Service Provision Governance in the Peri-urban Interface of Metropolitan Areas Research Project, Peri-urban

## A. DEMANDS FOR POLICY REFORM

AID initially accepted the need for further investment and agreed in 1993 to the preparation of a follow-on programme.<sup>99</sup> It subsequently declined to fund this extension of wastewater funding, however, because the Egyptian government had failed to raise wastewater tariffs so as to pay for the system's O&M costs.<sup>100</sup> While acknowledging that the capital costs of the original GCWWP expansion were unlikely to be recouped, AID was unwilling to provide additional funding in the absence of sufficient cost recovery from consumers to finance the operation of completed works.<sup>101</sup>

From the inception of the GCWWP, AID and ODA had been concerned by the lack of any wastewater tariff and the Cairo wastewater authority's dependence on top-down budgeting. In their view, this ensured that there would never be enough money to meet the wastewater sector's O&M requirements, let alone capital expansion to accommodate increasing demand.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, financial autonomy was also crucial for cost recovery. Unless GOSD's budget depended on its revenues—as opposed to finance-ministry allocations without reference to either collections or operational needs—it would have little incentive to collect them.<sup>103</sup> Donors not only attributed the deteriorated state of the Cairo network to the government's failure to raise sufficient revenue from consumers, but believed that unless GOSD became financially viable, continued neglect was inevitable.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, an ironic consequence of donor investments in the Cairo sewer system was that it would become more expensive to operate.

## B. TARIFFS & CONDITIONALITIES

Despite a series of American efforts to impose conditionalities beginning in 1981,<sup>105</sup> little progress was made until July 1985 when the Egyptian government finally instituted a 10-percent surcharge on the water bills issued by General Organization for the Greater Cairo Water Supply (GOGCWS).<sup>106</sup> Still, the achievement of

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Research Project Team, Development Planning Unit, University College London: 28 [[http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/pui/research/current/governance/outputs/Cairo\\_Report2\\_2-full.zip](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/pui/research/current/governance/outputs/Cairo_Report2_2-full.zip)].

<sup>99</sup> AID (1994): 4; Mike Gould (1992) "Water/Wastewater Sector Strategy," AID memorandum (3 March): 9; ASCG, Inc (1992): ix, 95.

<sup>100</sup> Interview, Peter S. Argo, Chief of Division of Water and Wastewater, AID Cairo mission, Cairo, 30 March 1998; see also Ernst & Young (1994): II.17.

<sup>101</sup> AID/RIG/A (1994) "Audit of the Operation and Maintenance of USAID/Egypt Water and Wastewater Projects," Report No. 6-263-94-008 (30 August): 12.

<sup>102</sup> AID (1982): 9; ODA (1994), vol. 1: 20-1.

<sup>103</sup> AID (1983): 14 [para 3.13].

<sup>104</sup> AID (1983): 15-16 [para 3.15]; (1982): 1, 13.

<sup>105</sup> AID (1983): 27 [para 4.02].

<sup>106</sup> Lieberson et al. (1994): 45.

persuading the Egyptian government to introduce this charge was more apparent than real. By 1991, GOSD was recouping perhaps less than five percent of its operating costs from tariff income.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, the Egyptian government had not increased the surcharge further so to achieve a minimum 50 percent O&M cost recovery by 1992, which had been agreed with AID in the mid 1980s. For the first time in its Cairo sewerage interventions, AID withheld approval for two infrastructure contracts pending progress on the issue.<sup>108</sup> This pressure led the Egyptian government, in July 1991, to increase the surcharge to 20 percent.<sup>109</sup>

So while GOSD and the wastewater producers continued to receive substantial subsidies,<sup>110</sup> the 1991 increase did seem to signal the Egyptian government's commitment to raise the residential tariff until all such wastewater customers were surcharged at 50 percent.<sup>111</sup> AMBRIC had estimated that—in the 1995-2005 period—a water bill surcharge of between 42 and 56 percent would allow for full cost recovery of O&M costs.<sup>112</sup> The Egyptian government, however, did not subsequently increase the wastewater surcharge, and by 1996 GOSD was still recouping only 24 percent of its steadily increasing O&M expenses from tariffs—with a subsidy from the finance ministry amounting to 60 percent of its revenues.

### C. DEFENDING PRIVILEGE?

Egyptian unwillingness to increase cost recovery was framed in the same language used to resist economic reform more generally. GOSD's director during this period declared that "as a political decision, we do not want to burden the Egyptian citizen more."<sup>113</sup> Indeed, actual authority to increase tariffs was at the level of the prime minister and the Cairo governor<sup>114</sup> who likely believed that low-income Egyptians could not afford raised tariffs and hence saw any increase as "destabilizing."<sup>115</sup> In short, they portrayed water and wastewater services as social-

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<sup>107</sup> ASCG, Inc. (1994): 64-5 [Tables 4.5 & 4.6]; see also, Lieberson et al. (1994): 45.

<sup>108</sup> ASCG, Inc. (1992): 63, 80-1.

<sup>109</sup> Michael Hanrahan et al. (1993) "Using Capital Projects to Promote Development and US Commercial Interests: Economic and Financial Analyses of AID Capital Projects in Egypt," AID Evaluation Technical Report No. 9 (November): 53.

<sup>110</sup> Ernst & Young (1994): II.6-7; III.5 [Table III-3]; III.8 [Exhibit III-3]; IV.7; ODA (1994) vol. 1: 56 [para 4.73]; see also, Interview, Peter S. Argo, 30 March 1998.

<sup>111</sup> Hanrahan (1993): 53.

<sup>112</sup> AMBRIC (1993): 6-5 – 6-9 [Tables 6.2-5].

<sup>113</sup> Tadros (1996a): 14.

<sup>114</sup> Concerning the role of prime minister, see Fred Zobrist et al. (1995) "Evaluation of the Institutional Support Contract for Cairo General Organization for Sanitary Drainage," Environmental Health Project, Activity Report No. 14, prepared for USAID Mission to Egypt under EHP Activity No. 196-RC: 31 (September): 31; concerning the role of governor, see Ernst & Young (1994): I. 8; see also, Interview, Peter S. Argo, 30 March 1998.

<sup>115</sup> AID (1983): 3 [para 1.11]; see also, ASCG, Inc. (1992): 74; Gould (1992): 5.

contract entitlements.<sup>116</sup> Tariff hikes might thus trigger civil unrest, exactly what the GCWWP was supposed to avoid.<sup>117</sup>

AID officials were sceptical that Egyptian resistance reflected concern for the poor. One argued that “protests [...] are far more likely to come from households which have had sewage facilities and water for a long time, and are suddenly expected to pay.”<sup>118</sup> Similarly, an AID-funded contractor study noted that: “elections have historically been a key reason given for delaying tariff increases since the beginning of the [AID] program in Egypt” but then observed: “in reality, tariffs probably have little, if any, relation to the outcome of elections.”<sup>119</sup> Such views echo Alan Richards’ more general contention that while Egyptian governments may claim to fear “inchoate popular wrath,” nonetheless those with a vested interest in the *status quo* are probably the more significant obstacle to policy reform.<sup>120</sup>

Indeed, the *status quo* was well worth defending. Upper-income consumers spent the smallest percentage of monthly household income on wastewater, with the heaviest burden falling on middle-income consumers.<sup>121</sup> Those not connected to the centralized wastewater system, most likely to be in informal areas, paid substantially more for water and drainage than those who were.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, the benefits of Cairo’s improved wastewater service have been disproportionately distributed to the well to do.<sup>123</sup> A 1991 AMBRIC paper reported that, per capita, upper-income groups produced almost five times as much wastewater per day as those in the low-income band.<sup>124</sup> So overall, informal and *sha’bi* Cairenes pay more and get less in terms of water and wastewater service. On the grounds of distributional equity alone, increased cost recovery would be beneficial if it allowed, whether directly or indirectly, increased resources to be used on connecting low-income households to the network.

Moreover, AID and its consultants were hardly oblivious to the dangers and inequities of attempting to achieve cost-recovery on the backs of the urban poor. In 1994, they recommended a cross-subsidization scheme whereby non-domestic wastewater producers would pay an inflated tariff.<sup>125</sup> Interestingly, a British review

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<sup>116</sup> For a suggestion of this, see Folk-Williams et al. (1999): 4; see also Weinbaum (1986): 132-3.

<sup>117</sup> For a suggestion of this, see Ernst & Young (1994): III.12.

<sup>118</sup> Tadros (1996a): 14.

<sup>119</sup> Zobrist et al. (1995): 63.

<sup>120</sup> Richards (1991): 1727.

<sup>121</sup> Ernst & Young (1994): III.12 [Table III-4].

<sup>122</sup> Ernst & Young (1994): III.12 [Table III-4], III.14; John P. Hoehn and Douglas J. Krieger (2000) “An Economic Analysis of Water and Wastewater Investments in Cairo, Egypt,” *Evaluation Review*, 24, 6: 593.

<sup>123</sup> Ernst & Young (1994): III.10, VII.12.

<sup>124</sup> AMBRIC (1991): 28 [Table 2-7]; see also Ernst & Young (1994): II.11.

<sup>125</sup> Ernst & Young (1994): V.20.

of the GCWWP argued that full cost-recovery would only be possible if high-income and -volume wastewater producers bore a disproportionate share of the tariff burden.<sup>126</sup>

#### D. INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

The inadequacy of the nominal tariff was not the only thing standing in the way of wastewater cost recovery. Equally important to AID was GOSD's institutional autonomy. To begin with, cost recovery was complicated by the fact that its tariff surcharge was part of the water bills issued by GOGCWS.<sup>127</sup> In the early 1990s, some studies suggested that this agency collected no more than 40 percent of its water bills.<sup>128</sup> Government offices, public-sector firms and the military—the customer class expected to provide a cross-subsidy for low-income residential customers—apparently paid only between 10-30 percent of their bills.<sup>129</sup> Were the level of collections to increase, according to AMBRIC, the extent of the surcharge required for full O&M cost recovery could be substantially reduced.<sup>130</sup>

Moreover, water consumption was rarely metered<sup>131</sup> which precluded any attempt to create a flexible tariff structure linked to consumption. Indeed, 40 percent of the water produced was not even billed for—a problem said to be particularly acute in Cairo's informal neighbourhoods.<sup>132</sup> In addition, the GOSD's dependence on another agency for such fundamental administrative tasks as billing and revenue collection compromised its ability to manage the network in a number of crucial respects. For example, it had no means of identifying those who did not pay their bills, or terminating their service.<sup>133</sup> Further, a series of AMBRIC studies noted that GOSD had no means of determining how much it cost to operate the wastewater network and what load different categories of wastewater producers placed on the system, so as to set tariff levels accordingly.<sup>134</sup>

As the “fiscal needs of the state affect not only what the government does but also what it knows,” these examples of institutional weakness also speak to the GOSD's

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<sup>126</sup> ODA (1994) vol. 2: 104 [*paras E5.1.2-3*].

<sup>127</sup> Ernst & Young (1994): xii; Hanrahan (1993): xiv.

<sup>128</sup> AMBRIC (1993): 6-4; see also AID/RIG/A (1997) “Audit of the USAID/Egypt's Water and Wastewater Activities,” Report No 6-263-97-005-P (30 June): 7-8; Ernst & Young et al. (1994): iii-iv, II.10; Hanrahan (1993): 53.

<sup>129</sup> Ernst & Young (1994): iii, VII.11; Philip Giantris et al. (1999) “Assessment of the Managerial Capacity of the Cairo General Organization for Sanitary Drainage,” Development Alternatives Inc., prepared for the United States Agency for International Development under Contract #HNE-C-00-96-90027-00 (February): 18.

<sup>130</sup> AMBRIC (1993): 6.10.

<sup>131</sup> Ernst & Young (1994): VII.12; see also: viii, II.10.

<sup>132</sup> ASCG, Inc. (1992): 67.

<sup>133</sup> Ernst & Young (1994): xii; Giantris (1999): 13.

<sup>134</sup> ASCG, Inc. (1992): 67; Ernst & Young (1994): iii.

lack of financial autonomy.<sup>135</sup> At the heart of its institutional dysfunction was the fact that most of whatever tariff revenue it did manage to collect was passed to the finance ministry which continued to provide the agency with most of its budget regardless of the nominal rate of tariff-based cost recovery.<sup>136</sup> Thus GOSD had few institutional incentives to undertake cost recovery or increase its institutional autonomy from GOGCWS. Moreover the issues of tariff and collection rates were essentially accounting fictions, since GOSD presumably continued to receive the bulk of its budget without reference to either its revenue recovery or requirements.

Probably as the result of substantial AID pressure, however, Mubarak issued a decree in 1994 establishing GOSD as a “General Economic Organization,” apparently allowing it to retain revenue to cover its O&M costs although it was still subject to national administrative regulations and unable to set tariffs.<sup>137</sup> Yet again, the effects of this measure were more apparent than real as the available evidence indicates that the Egyptian government continued to resist granting GOSD substantive institutional autonomy.<sup>138</sup>

#### E. AID RETHINKS ITS ROLE

In August 1994, AID decided to make its funding of any further Cairo wastewater investment “contingent upon [Egyptian government] actions to increase tariffs as necessary to meet the objective of full recovery of O&M costs from the sewer tariff based revenue.”<sup>139</sup> Although GOSD agreed to do so and its September agreement with AID was reportedly “ratified by parliament,”<sup>140</sup> the organization was ultimately unable to make sufficient progress by 1996 to satisfy AID’s conditions for further GCWWP investment.<sup>141</sup> As noted earlier, there was little progress on the tariff or institutional-autonomy issues. Satisfying the cost-recovery stipulation was initially hampered by announcements from the prime minister and the governor of Cairo that no tariffs would be raised prior to the 1995 parliamentary elections.<sup>142</sup> A 1995 report commented that GOSD “had not yet been able to bring about the tariff increases agreed to by the Government of Egypt and [AID],”—noting that it had only “indirect and limited” influence in this area.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Kiren Aziz Chaudhry (1997) *The Price of Wealth: Economies and Institutions in the Middle East*. Cornell University Press: 33.

<sup>136</sup> ODA (1994) vol. 1: 57 [para 4.77].

<sup>137</sup> AID/RIG/A (1994): 3-4 [Appendix V]; Zobrist et al. (1995): 67 [Appendix A].

<sup>138</sup> Giantris et al. (1999): 9; Zobrist et al. (1995): 30-1, 63.

<sup>139</sup> ASCG, Inc. (1992): xi.

<sup>140</sup> Zobrist et al. (1995) : 63.

<sup>141</sup> Interview, Peter S. Argo, 30 March 1998.

<sup>142</sup> Zobrist et al. (1995) : 63.

<sup>143</sup> Zobrist et al. (1995): viii.



Ironically, the Egyptian government's resistance to AID conditionalities may have been exacerbated by AID's exclusively west-bank focus with respect to the GCWWP. Retrospectively, an AID official observed that while the Cairo governor (likely 'Umar 'Abd al-Akhir) had opposed rate increases, the Giza governor (Abdel-Rahim Shehata) had supported them.<sup>144</sup> By advocating compliance, Shehata could expect to benefit from the further substantial AID investments in his territory. By contrast, his east-bank counterpart and *de facto* administrative superior had no such incentives. In fact, 'Abd al-Akhir had only disincentives to support a tariff hike. He would have to face whatever complaints and opposition further tariff increases provoked without being able to ameliorate them with promises of the concomitant American investment which his junior would enjoy.<sup>145</sup>

The more general political sensitivity of the issue was subsequently evident in the wake of April 2004 presidential decrees, encouraged by AID, to reform water and wastewater sector institutions and raise tariff levels.<sup>146</sup> The decrees appear to have triggered a press campaign against a tariff hike. By October 2004, according to well-informed observers, the Mubarak government had "retreated" from its commitment to do so.<sup>147</sup> Whether or not this apparent campaign reflected bottom-up or intra-elite opposition, it nonetheless suggests the persistence of risk avoidance practices in official decision-making and illustrates the constraining effects of public opinion.

But even before it decided against the follow-on wastewater programme, AID's emphasis was gradually shifting away from construction in favour of the sustainability of existing works. Beginning in September 1992,<sup>148</sup> AID undertook the Institutional Support Contract (ISC) intended to address the problems in virtually every aspect of GOSD's internal workings<sup>149</sup> which rendered it unable to operate and maintain the new wastewater network.<sup>150</sup> They included overstaffing and the organization's inability to retain skilled personnel due to low salaries.<sup>151</sup> By the end of 1998, however, ISC had had a minimal impact—strongly suggesting the need for

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<sup>144</sup> Interview, Peter S. Argo, 30 March 1998.

<sup>145</sup> Similarly, Shehata was unlikely to cooperate with initiatives apparently favouring the Cairo governorate; see Interviews, John R. Bowers, 13 April 2000; Kevin Tayler, 17 November 1999.

<sup>146</sup> AID/RIG/A (2004) "Sustainability of USAID-Financed Utility Infrastructure Activities in Egypt," Report No. 6-263-05-001-S (31 October): 12; El Hefnawi & El Gohary (2004): 12.

<sup>147</sup> El Hefnawi & El Gohary (2004): 12.

<sup>148</sup> Zobrist et al. (1995) : vii.

<sup>149</sup> ASCG, Inc. (1992): 90; see also: 85-8.

<sup>150</sup> AID (1994): 4; see also, Gould (1992): 3.

<sup>151</sup> AID (1983): 23-6; (1982): 10; (1978a): 21, 40; ASCG, Inc. (1992): 67, 73.

progress on the larger issue of institutional autonomy.<sup>152</sup> A similar ODA effort in the early 1990s does not appear to have been significantly more successful.<sup>153</sup>

#### F. AVOIDING RESPONSIBILITY

GOSD's continuing inability to operate the refurbished and upgraded network does not augur well for the sustainability of donor investments. While the over-design of some infrastructure and AID's provision of spare parts as part of the original construction contract are likely to mitigate somewhat the immediate risks of system deterioration,<sup>154</sup> nonetheless a report from the late 1990s noted signs of infrastructure deterioration with the possibility of "frequent system failures" in the future.<sup>155</sup> Although these initial indications are hardly comparable to the state of the pre-project wastewater network, there is little excess capacity on the east bank. A major system fault would likely result in large-scale flooding throughout the built-up area within hours.<sup>156</sup>

Nonetheless, GOSD may have found an unorthodox solution to its shortcomings. Citing disputes with the construction contractors, it has refused to take over some east-bank facilities following their completion—leaving their operations to private contractors.<sup>157</sup> While it is not impossible that GOSD may have some legitimate grounds for its refusal, it is tempting to conclude that it has opted for a 'third way' solution. Rejecting the alternatives always posited by donors of increased administrative capacity versus renewed system deterioration, GOSD has left the east-bank network for others to deal with. In any event, there is little sign that the Egyptian government's almost quarter century dependence on external assistance for meeting the sanitary drainage needs of its capital is at an end.

## 6.4 THE DANGERS OF PARTICIPATION IN SOUTH CAIRO

As suggested earlier (6.2.3), the GCWWP's relative success resulted from the fact that it was essentially a large, often externally funded, construction project posing little challenge to the logic of neglectful rule. This claim is further supported, albeit indirectly, by a subsequent British effort to extend the GCWWP's benefits to under-

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<sup>152</sup> Giantris et al. (1999): 11-12, 15-20, 22, 24-8, 30-4, 42.

<sup>153</sup> ODA (1994) vol. 2: 52-5.

<sup>154</sup> AMBRIC (1993): 5.5-6; Lieberson (1994): 2, 11 [*Appendix C*].

<sup>155</sup> Giantris et al. (1999): ii; see also: 25-8, 30.

<sup>156</sup> ODA (1994) vol. 2: 91 [*para E1.2*].

<sup>157</sup> Kinias et al. (2000): ii-iv, 4, 13.

served communities in south Cairo.<sup>158</sup> This initiative was likely blocked—consistent with Egyptian resistance to donor interventions observed in previous chapters—because it was predicated on the bottom-up mobilization of beneficiary communities.

#### 6.4.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND & DESIGN

Although the ODA had been a key participant in the GCWWP from the outset, its March 1994 evaluation of the project—already cited throughout this chapter—was surprisingly critical of the GCWWP’s infrastructure orientation. The authors noted that the project was intended to improve public health, but was “conceived largely as an engineering solution to a perceived problem and not as a component of a wider social programme to improve health.”<sup>159</sup> They further noted the uneven distribution of servicing, particularly with respect to South Cairo, and the Egyptian government’s inability to provide it.<sup>160</sup>

These latter observations were subsequently embodied in what became known as the Cairo Poverty Alleviation project. Developed between July 1996 and April 1997, it was a 3-year £4.6 million technical-cooperation programme to provide neighbourhood sewers and house connections to at least 60,000 people in two impoverished areas in the Cairo governorate’s South Cairo district (see Map 6.1).<sup>161</sup> Although they were never formally selected, the areas would likely have included an informal community slated for demolition on the 1993 lists but then re-designated for upgrading.<sup>162</sup> Project goals were not, however, simply to provide utilities. ODA also sought to promote administrative reform in the wastewater sector as well as greater bottom-up participation in the state’s governance.<sup>163</sup> Hence the project’s participatory character served two functions. On the one hand, it would contribute to the cost effectiveness of servicing, as beneficiaries would contribute their labour or otherwise meet project costs. On the other, it would increase their capability “to articulate and address their needs”<sup>164</sup> to “government service providers.”<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> This case study is based, in part, on private conversations with British sources, NGO staff and other concerned parties, as well as a consultancy paper provided on a not-for-attribution basis. None of them will be explicitly referenced.

<sup>159</sup> ODA (1994) vol. 1: 10 [*para 21*].

<sup>160</sup> ODA (1994) vol. 1: 10-11 [*para 25*].

<sup>161</sup> ODA (1997) “Cairo Wastewater: Support to Deprived Areas,” draft project document, West and North Africa Department (16 April): npn (para 1.6).

<sup>162</sup> The project paper refers to two such neighbourhoods, see ODA (1997): Annex 1 [*paras 3-6*], 15.

<sup>163</sup> ODA (1997): npn (para 3.3.3).

<sup>164</sup> ODA (1997): npn (para 1.2[2]).

<sup>165</sup> ODA (1997): 13 [*Annex 2/3*].

To these ends, the ODA project paper proposed that two nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—the Egyptian Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS) and the American Near East Foundation (NEF)—be retained to mobilize the recipient communities on behalf of the project. Indeed, CEOSS and NEF were to have a central role in virtually all its aspects. At the outset, they would be involved in the identification of the project areas. That complete, they would then be tasked with entering the chosen communities in order to facilitate resident participation. They would then support the participatory planning and implementation of the sewerage works as well as be involved in a number of follow-on initiatives related to their sustainability.<sup>166</sup>

#### 6.4.2 RESISTING GRASS-ROOTS MOBILIZATION

Although some AMBRIC staff were sceptical that a sewerage project could be made participatory, their doubts were never put to the test as the South Cairo Poverty Alleviation initiative failed to win Egyptian-government approval. While the proposal apparently had received informal Egyptian clearance before its submission in September 1997, ODA—now renamed the Department for International Development (DfID)—had not received official approval by Spring 1998; other wastewater proposals submitted at the same time had been approved. Although the international cooperation ministry, GOSD and the Cairo governorate had apparently agreed to the project, its NGO element required that it be submitted to the social-affairs ministry—which seems to have had reservations.

So the NGO component—with its mandate to “develop the capacity of poor people and other vulnerable groups to articulate their needs to government service providers”<sup>167</sup>—appears to have been the project’s undoing. In general terms, the Mubarak government’s reluctance to permit NGOs a mobilizational role should not have been surprising.<sup>168</sup> The notorious Law 32 (1964), still in force at this time, gave the social-affairs ministry broad powers to constrain NGO activities and make them dependent on its goodwill and patronage.<sup>169</sup> Ruling party politicians have often used their privileged access to state resources to create or gain control of NGOs and then use them as vehicles for distributing patronage, augmenting their local power bases.<sup>170</sup>

Moreover, DfID seems to have overestimated the extent to which CEOSS and NEF were accepted social-development actors in south Cairo. Although the former had

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<sup>166</sup> ODA (1997): 13 [*Annex 2/3*].

<sup>167</sup> ODA (1997): 13 [*Annex 2/3*].

<sup>168</sup> White (1986): 250-1.

<sup>169</sup> Zubaida (1997): 57.

<sup>170</sup> Harders (1998): 14.

funded a local-government programme to upgrade a market there, it entailed little interaction with the district office. More generally, CEOSS has long been regarded with suspicion by state officials,<sup>171</sup> perhaps because it was a Christian organization often working in Muslim communities or because donors such as AID sought to deal with it directly—bypassing the state bureaucracy.<sup>172</sup>

For its part, NEF had recently experienced the predatory character of ruling-party clientelism when it attempted a rubbish-removal project in the Sayyida Zaynab neighbourhood in Spring 1996.<sup>173</sup> Cairo governorate officials had indirectly advised NEF to seek the support of prominent politician Fathi Surur, Speaker of the Maglis al-Sha‘b. Surur gave it his backing and assigned an NGO—run by his entourage—to work with NEF. Surur’s NGO both ignored and attempted to clientelize the project, portraying it as a “gift” from the politician, rejecting community involvement and likely misappropriating project funds through the purchase of sub-standard equipment.<sup>174</sup> In a perhaps unrelated development, the social-affairs ministry revoked NEF’s permission to work in Sayyida Zaynab in the summer of 1997 (although it was restored the following year).

Given this background, both general and specific, tacit Egyptian opposition to the DfID project’s NGO component was not entirely surprising. Pragmatically, DfID reopened discussions of the project with the social-affairs and international-cooperation ministries in early 1999. These discussions led to a revision of the project documents and their subsequent resubmission. In particular, there was the issue of presenting the project to the Maglis al-Sha‘b for their approval. Tellingly, the social-affairs ministry told DfID that pre-selecting the American and Coptic NGOs for the project was problematic; Maglis members might have their own client NGOs which they wished to put forward. As a consequence, the resubmitted proposal “unselected” CEOSS and NEF. At least in principle, the Egyptian side would be able to propose the local participants.

Although the Egyptian government finally gave its approval in Spring 2000, the project—at least as originally formulated—appeared unlikely to be implemented. Among its other concerns, DfID had become suspicious that GOSD was seeking to divert its assistance from the impoverished communities originally intended for servicing, so as to provide connections to a more affluent neighbourhood nearby.

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<sup>171</sup> Springborg (1989): 155.

<sup>172</sup> With respect to such sensitivities, see Sullivan (1994): 85-91, 122-3; see also, Maha AbdelRahman (1998) “Civil Society Against Itself: Egyptian NGOs in the Neo-Liberal Era,” paper presented at the Third EURAMES Conference, Ghent, Belgium (September): 9.

<sup>173</sup> For discussions of this project, see Kamal (2001): 51-65; Samer al-Karanshawy (2001) “Participatory Approaches to Urban Development in Egypt: The Experience of a Non-Governmental Organization” in Seteney Shami ed., *Capital Cities: Ethnographies of Urban Governance*. Centre for Urban & Community Studies, University of Toronto: 67-83.

<sup>174</sup> Al-Karanshawy (2001): 73; see also: 71-3.

This latter area may have included a housing development sponsored by Mubarak's wife.

## 6.5 CONCLUSIONS

This account of the GCWWP and the British follow-on effort concludes the empirical portion of the thesis. In some respects, the GCWWP constitutes a stark contrast from the other projects discussed in Section B. Not only was its implementation more successful, the completed infrastructure has played an important role in improving everyday in Cairo's formal and informal neighbourhoods. Indeed, the GCWWP has probably had a far more positive effect on informal communities than any other donor intervention in Cairo's urban development.

But with respect to the broader donor objective of fostering an administratively competent state—in this instance capable of servicing Cairo sustainably—there are similarities between the case studies presented here and those from the previous chapters. Egyptian state agencies continued to resist donor-backed policy reforms. GCWWP was successful only insofar as its backers refrained from imposing conditionalities to achieve them. Indeed, the project exemplifies the large-scale transfer of resources characteristic of the Washington-Cairo aid relationship and perhaps even the edifice complex tendency observed earlier in the thesis.

More generally, the capacity of the Egyptian state to intervene in society continues to be constrained by the exigencies of the post-1952 political order. Indeed, the South Cairo case offers a relatively direct look into the logic of authoritarian power relations of which the logic of neglectful rule is a consequence. Hence the long-term sustainability of the \$1.5 billion donor investment is uncertain. The GCWWP risks being overwhelmed by Cairo's growth, and the incompetence of its operators. So the pathologies of informal Cairo—in this case its lack of servicing and putative filth—may yet again be ultimately linked to the workings of the political order.

As in the previous chapter, this concluding section will examine the thematic continuities between the interventions discussed in this chapter and the previous case studies. There continue to be interesting interactions between the donor approaches, on the one hand, and the logic of neglectful rule and post-1952 political order more generally on the other. These points of comparison will set the stage for the broader examination of both Parts A and B of the thesis in the concluding chapter.

### 6.5.1 URBAN PACIFICATION

One heretofore unexamined similarity among the cases considered in Section B of the thesis is that a number of them were intended to enable the Egyptian state to better secure its capital, often aiming to address the factors which had ostensibly precipitated the January 1977 riots. Besides the more general desire of aid agencies in the 1970s to assist the West's new Middle-East ally, the Helwan Housing and Community Upgrading project, for example, was intended to pacify the restive and excessively mobile workers who seem to have been rioting on a regular basis since the late 1960s. Similarly, the ring road—the centre-piece of Cairo planning in the 1970s and 1980s—may have been intended to help facilitate the movement of troops around the capital. For its part, the GCWWP was intended to forestall both urban unrest and the dangers to civil order threatened by a breakdown in basic urban services. Although the first half of this rationale may have originated in the 1977 riots, FAR servicing seems to have figured in the upgrading which was supposed to deny the Islamists their Giza bases.

That said, one should not make too much of the security rationale for urban development. For example, it did little for the success of the Helwan project in the face of the AID intervention's challenge to the state's neglectful rule of informal Cairo and the housing sector more generally. The building of the ring road, moreover, was likely driven by a number of factors. Nonetheless, the security dimension of these projects is, in part, illustrative of western efforts to back their local allies in Cairo through the transfer of strategic rents—amounting to the external supply of infrastructural power to bolster a political order whose foundations are largely despotic.

### 6.5.2 INFRASTRUCTURE VERSUS DEVELOPMENT

This last point suggests another observation about the nature of aid relationship between Egypt and its western backers. Although indications of construction-related rent-seeking were limited to the example of EGYCON and the prominence of Arab Contractors amongst project subcontractors more generally, nonetheless the GCWWP case continues the emphasis on urban development understood as infrastructure-provision which is manifest in the previous chapters and has long dominated Egypt's development trajectory.

Such a statement is not meant to suggest that the donors were wrong to have constructed a centralized large-scale system in Cairo, as opposed to the lower-cost "appropriate technology" solutions often recommended for other developing countries because they can be installed and operated without subsidy.<sup>175</sup> While the

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<sup>175</sup> For a discussion of these, see: D.D. Mara (1996) "Unconventional Sewerage Systems: Their Role in Low-cost Urban Sanitation" in Duncan Mara ed., *Low-Cost Sewerage*. John Wiley & Sons: 13-18.

GCWWP was criticized for its high cost,<sup>176</sup> the Egyptian agencies involved with the GCWWP showed little interest in septic tanks as an interim drainage solution, suggesting that they were unlikely to have accepted lower-standard infrastructure.<sup>177</sup> More substantively, lower-capacity systems were probably not suitable given the population densities in Cairo—and especially its informal neighbourhoods—and because much of the east bank was already sewered conventionally.<sup>178</sup>

Yet the GCWWP's history suggests that the programme's development was sometimes driven by the availability of money and the desire to spend it in publicly visible ways, rather than by a careful examination of Egypt's overall needs with respect to sanitary drainage.<sup>179</sup> For example, while AID seems to have been initially sceptical of the British-backed spine tunnel on the grounds that it exceeded the east bank's likely wastewater out-put, its own expensive investment in wastewater treatment—not an American priority at the outset—came after Mubarak's personal request. More positively, the American commitment to flood abatement was consistent throughout the intervention and the local connections element seems to have been added after AID realized that the Egyptians would not provide it. Yet one can still reasonably argue that donors have 'over-invested' in Cairo relative to the pressing need for water and sanitation infrastructure in other sectors of Egyptian society, reinforcing the city's politically privileged position.<sup>180</sup>

Moreover, the GCWWP's immediate and long-term expense meant that it was not a project that any other donor would have likely attempted elsewhere in the developing world.<sup>181</sup> Such capital projects had not been a major part of US development assistance since the 1960s, in fact, because of criticisms that they were often poor value for money and did not significantly improve their recipients' economic development (3.3.2C). Indeed, the GCWWP is exactly the kind of high-standard and highly subsidized infrastructure project—without a built-in policy-reform element—that AID and the World Bank declined to provide in their other Cairo interventions.

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<sup>176</sup> Roberts & Flaxman (1985): 722 [para 44].

<sup>177</sup> J.P. Somerville & A.D.K. Kell (1993) "Conclusions and Future Requirements," *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers*, Special Issue: Greater Cairo Wastewater Project: 68 [para 4].

<sup>178</sup> Concerning the population-density issue, see Roberts & Flaxman (1985): 722-3 [para 45].

<sup>179</sup> Lieberman (1994): 15.

<sup>180</sup> For example, Roy L. Prosterman & Timothy Hanstead (1992) "Egyptian Development and US Aid: A 25-Year Retrospective," RDI Monographs on Foreign Aid and Development #9, Rural Development Institute, Seattle, Washington (March): 15; Roy L. Prosterman & Jeffrey M. Riedinger (1984) "The Quality of Foreign Aid," RDI Monographs on Foreign Aid and Development #1, Rural Development Institute, Seattle, Washington (June): 3-4.

<sup>181</sup> Dale Whittington et al. (1993) "Household Demand for Improved Sanitation Services in Kumasi, Ghana: A Contingent Valuation Study," *Water Resources Research*, 29, 6: 1557; for an example of this point, see Richard C. Porter (1996) *The Economics of Water and Waste: a case study of Jakarta, Indonesia*. Avebury: 52.



This analysis suggests, again, that the GCWWP exemplifies the transfer of strategic rents from Washington and Cairo well in excess of what would otherwise be justified. Its real benefits to Cairenes notwithstanding, the project is a kind of edifice deriving from AID's need to spend down the ESF backlog despite the Egyptian economy's limited absorptive capacity restricting the opportunities to do so. Like other mega-projects, it serves as a *façade*; in this case, it obscures the Egyptian state's still limited capacity to provide basic public services as suggested by GOSD's unwillingness to take over completed east-bank works and inability to provide local connections. Thus the GCWWP's problems of sustainability—to be addressed below—are less than surprising.

### 6.5.3 PRIVILEGE VERSUS SUSTAINABILITY

Although the process was more protracted than in many of the previous project cases, the GCWWP was eventually transformed into a struggle over policy reform. While AID and ODA efforts to promote it were too late in coming, they had a reasonable basis. Whereas AID and the World Bank's earlier advocacy of a self-contained upgrading, housing and land-development process was generally conceded to be unfeasible by the 1990s, the GCWWP donors had more modest and plausible demands of GOSD. For its part, AID seemed entirely willing to continue the ESF-funded expansion of the west-bank wastewater network on the (not unreasonable) condition that GOSD be able to operate and maintain the completed works. To this end, it urged a series of institutional reforms, including that GOSD recover a substantial portion of its costs in collecting, conveying and treating the wastewater.

As with policy reform more generally, the Mubarak government resisted an increased wastewater tariff. Although justified in the customary language of protecting the poor and forestalling bottom-up unrest, not entirely implausible in this context, such claims ring false on several grounds. Not only did AID make a calculated attempt to ensure that cost-recovery would not fall hardest on the lowest-income consumers, the principal beneficiaries of the *status quo* were well-off Egyptians. Indeed, policy reform offered the prospect of further AID-funded servicing which would have distributed the GCWWP benefits even more widely, particularly in informal areas.

Hence it is more plausible to see the Mubarak government's resistance to policy reform as a defence of entrenched privilege—a theme running throughout this thesis—against donor efforts to introduce a degree of equity and state-society engagement. Perhaps the simplest explanation is that the Egyptian authorities were unwilling to contemplate reform in the wastewater sector lest it open the door to further US demands for more reforms elsewhere in the economy. Staying in the wastewater sector, however, perhaps the prime minister, governor of Cairo and GOSD officials feared that increased water and wastewater charges would trigger

protests, especially in the absence of any meaningful municipal representation, if GOSD attempted to enforce them. Such opposition would be coming not from marginalized subalterns, but rather those whose welfare depends on subsidized access to state services, ranging from traditional elites to newly connected informal householders—exactly the sort of broad coalition which Egyptian governments have always sought to forestall.

Even if such a scenario seems speculative, the Mubarak government's resistance to wastewater tariff reform contradicts claims that the 'social contract' has ended. While commercial subsidies and perhaps entitlements to employment and education have likely been waning since the 1990s, donor investments in infrastructure mean that top-down distribution has been implicitly shifting into the highly subsidized provision of services. They are a privilege from which an increasing number of Cairenes—in unserved areas which might otherwise have been connected—will gradually be excluded, a reversion to the pattern of state-society relations in effect prior to the GCWWP.

While such privileges are likely a key part of what sustains the post-1952 order, they ultimately jeopardize service provision. AID's withdrawal from the provision of wastewater infrastructure in the mid 1990s meant that it would no longer provide local connections to increase coverage commensurate with Cairo's continuing growth, or the backbone infrastructure needed to cover the rising loads place on the wastewater network. More generally, there is no guarantee that GOSD—in the absence of sufficient revenue—will be able to sustain the wastewater network's increased O&M burden.

#### 6.5.4 RESISTING INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

As in the previous case studies, institutional changes were a crucial part of donor demands for policy reform. In the earlier initiatives, however, institutional reform was often a long-term goal and the first casualty of Egyptian resistance. In the GCWWP case, by contrast, AID and ODA/DfID undertook a concerted effort—in parallel with their demands for increased cost recovery—to reorganize GOSD as an administratively autonomous utility capable of operating and maintaining the donor-built works.

Yet they made little headway, perhaps because such reforms challenged the clientelistic logic of bureaucracy in which agencies such as GOSD exist, in part, to provide jobs—at the expense of their nominal responsibilities. Moreover, giving the organization autonomy would perhaps undermine the bureaucracy's utility as a tool of top-down political control which is at the heart of the post-1952 order's reproduction. While GOSD might not seem a strategically important agency, its institutional independence might have a potentially dangerous demonstration effect should other government units seek to follow its example.

Moreover, the creation of a centralized wastewater authority would undermine the principles of division and fragmentation by which state officials, throughout the case studies examined in this thesis, have routinely fended off donor demands for reform. The Cairo wastewater sector exemplifies the centralization of authority and the fragmentation of responsibility characteristic of Egyptian state agencies. On the one hand, authority is centralized insofar as the crucial decisions with respect to wastewater tariffs and sectoral autonomy were apparently made by the governor of Cairo and prime minister. On the other hand, responsibility for the sector was highly fragmented. As in the other cases considered in this section, an agency (CWO) was created for the donors to work with, while operational control of the wastewater network's operations remained with the unreconstructed GOSD and the Cairo governorate. Donor influence was largely confined to CWO, essentially a contracting agency, while GOSD's lack of involvement with the GCWWP meant that there was little 'policy reform by osmosis'; it gained few incentives to support donor-backed policy reforms. Perhaps even more fundamentally, the artificial division of the water sector between GOSD and GOGCWS further obstructed donor efforts to demand wastewater cost-recovery.

#### 6.5.5 THE RESILIENCE OF THE *ASHWA'IYYAT*

The constraints placed on state capacity by the exigencies of the political order and the consequent durability of informal Cairo—with respect to the lack of servicing as a key element of the *ashwa'iyyat* definition—are clearly evident in the case of the Cairo Poverty Alleviation project and the demise of AID's FAR scheme.

On a micro-level, the former project was aimed by ODA/DfID at the type of marginal squatter-pocket areas at the heart of the 1993 demolition lists. It offered the kind of servicing that GOSD is unlikely to provide on any large scale and which is probably the *sine qua non* of any plausible attempt to upgrade the *ashwa'iyyat* systematically. Yet it was rebuffed, apparently by the social-affairs ministry which likely found the emphasis on NGO mobilization threatening. Such an intervention would go against the monopolization of power and atomization of society which is at the heart of the post-1952 dispensation. Moreover, the project's subsequent resubmission suggests the exigencies of clientelist politics. In this context, it is not surprising that GOSD apparently attempted to redirect such a tempting spoil away from its proposed informal beneficiaries. Hence the political order and its effect of neglectful rule is part of what preserves informal Cairo as an underserved zone.

The FAR case illustrates how the political order contributes to the durability of the informal on a much larger scale. Although this AID-funded wastewater servicing scheme provided connections to some 2 million in Giza through the mid 1990s, it became a casualty of the whole policy reform and sustainability disagreement between AID and the Mubarak government. Even before its completion, AMBRIC was projecting that the number of unconnected Cairenes would resume increasing

given the city's continued substantial growth. Yet again, the exigencies post-1952 order are implicated in the resilience of the *'ashwa' iyyat*.

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## CHAPTER 7

### STRONG REGIME, WEAK STATE

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Despite this account that often ascribes state-society disengagement to the post-1952 dispensation of power, Cairo's rulers have long found it difficult to intervene in the city. Judith Tucker, for example, notes nineteenth-century efforts by the Egyptian state "to assert its authority over the social life of the city" by imposing a Parisian street-plan of boulevards and open squares on the medieval core.<sup>1</sup> Its implementation proved so difficult, however, that only two streets and squares were completed.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent rulers—Khedive Isma'îl in the 1860s and the British after 1882<sup>3</sup>—hence pursued a "patchwork" approach to the city's development.<sup>4</sup> Instead of attempting to restructure the existing urban fabric, they built new neighbourhoods, in effect dividing Cairo into two distinct cities, one modernist and the other unreconstructed.<sup>5</sup> While Cairo's rapid development since the 1970s likely diminished this inherited dualism, it re-emerged in Sadat's attempt to 'end run' contemporary Cairo's developmental problems by means of desert urbanization and in the subsequent phenomenon of gated communities in the 1990s.<sup>6</sup>

So although long-standing and not purely a consequence of the post-1952 dispensation of power, the neglect of Cairo by its rulers is nonetheless of contemporary political interest because it illuminates aspects of that dispensation which might otherwise be hidden. This concluding chapter will show how it does so, by pulling together the main analytical and interpretive threads from the preceding chapters. After recapitulating their main points (Sec 7.1), it will take up the five thesis problematics in turn (Sec 7.2). Beginning with the absence of clearances and then proceeding to the lack of upgrading, it will further address the

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Tucker (1986) *Women in nineteenth-century Egypt*. American University in Cairo Press: 112.

<sup>2</sup> Tucker (1986): 111; see also Janet Abu-Lughod (1965) "Tale of Two Cities: the Origins of Modern Cairo," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 7, 4 (July): 448.

<sup>3</sup> Abu-Lughod (1965): 452; Tucker (1986): 112, 116.

<sup>4</sup> Moore (1994): 64.

<sup>5</sup> Abu-Lughod (1965): 429, 440; Tucker (1986): 112, 116.

<sup>6</sup> For a critique of the 'two cities' thesis, see El Kadi (1985): 35.

political significance of the social-pathology discourse that would appear to mandate them. Next, it will take up the general failure of donor-backed policy reform efforts despite substantial investments, and lastly deal with the irony of durable autocracy despite infrastructural weakness.

Finally, the chapter will conclude (7.3) with a short discussion of the thesis' contribution to some of the larger scholarly debates—whether between students of Egypt, the Middle East or the developing-world more generally—to which it has spoken. These issues include the impact of regime type on state-society relations and state performance; the role of the Egyptian military in Egyptian politics since Nasser; the significance of foreign aid in contemporary Egypt; the implications of the Egyptian case for the distributive-state paradigm; the need to ground the study of informality in political context; and the use of urban-development literature in the study of Cairene politics.

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## 7.1 SUMMING UP

### 7.1.1 PART A: THE EGYPTIAN STATE IN CAIRO

While not oblivious to the international dimension, Part A of the thesis was largely concerned with the Egyptian state's neglect of informal Cairo in a specifically domestic Egyptian context.

#### A. CHAPTER 1: AUTHORITARIANISM & NEGLECTFUL RULE

The first chapter began with the empirical puzzle of the Egyptian state's non-intervention in informal Cairo, despite the apparent need to deal with such neighbourhoods as demonstrated by the Cairo earthquake and the Islamists in Munira Gharbiyya. Although the stigmatizing *'ashwa'iyyat* discourse would appear to "facilitate the acceptance of and justify the implementation of *any* public policy"<sup>7</sup> towards informal communities, the Mubarak government seemed at pains to avoid the demolition option, and obviously preferred upgrading. Yet even this nominal commitment ultimately raised questions about the Egyptian state's ability to develop the informal zones of its capital. Overall, the Mubarak government's non-response to the seeming menace of informal Cairo suggested three specific problematics:

*Why did it not respond more decisively with respect to clearance of threatening and potentially threatening informal areas?*

*Why were its efforts at upgrading similarly limited?*

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<sup>7</sup> Perlman (1976): 248 [emphasis in the original].

*In the absence of state intervention, what is the political significance of the ‘ashwa’iyyat discourse?*

In the absence of a specific urban-politics literature, the thesis first addressed state-society relations in Egypt since 1952 more generally so as to set out the analytical and empirical context for the Cairo case. The contemporary Egyptian state can ironically be best understood as a “Lame Leviathan,” characterized by durable autocracy and state incompetence. The coercive and co-optive powers characteristic of authoritarian power relations undermine the more consensual exercise of infrastructural power by which democratically governed states mobilize their societies. Claims of developmental authoritarianism notwithstanding, non-democratic power relations—especially in a Middle Eastern context—seem more closely linked to state inaction and incompetence.

In the absence of bargaining and binding between rulers and ruled, state-society relations in authoritarian regimes are likely to be characterized by a *logic of neglectful rule*, entailing state-society disengagement; patrimonialism and clientelism; and risk avoidance. Indeed, contemporary Egyptian history since 1952 offers considerable evidence of the linkage between durable authoritarianism and a neglectful rule. On the one hand, the post-Nasserist political order is characterized by the monopolization of power in the elite, its concentration in a few centres—including the presidency and the military—and its informalization through devolved patronage. Despite the *façade* democracy in place since the 1970s, Egyptian society has been firmly demobilized and subject to extensive clientelization through *étatist* development policies since the late 1950s.

On the other hand, there is also ample evidence of state-society disengagement including a reliance on rural notables to maintain political control in the countryside at the cost of developmental stagnation, and the emergence of a substantial urban-informal sector. Patrimonialism has debilitated state regulatory and developmental capacities, meaning that its institutions serve mainly as vehicles for the delivery of patronage and as a space of elite competition. Tendencies to risk avoidance, particularly in urban settings, have reinforced its immobilism.

Yet this discussion of neglectful rule has suggested a further problematic, itself also latent in the dichotomy of despotic/infrastructural power:

*How can the authoritarian post-1952 political order endure if the state upon which it is based is weak?*

Unlike the first three problematics, this question admitted a more immediate, if provisional, answer: the international dimension. While the domestic Egyptian state-society relationship is the central concern of this thesis, it is important to remember that the state has not faced Egyptian society on its own. Since the 1950s, Egypt’s rulers have adroitly mobilized various kinds of international assistance—often as “strategic rent” from Moscow and Washington—thus helping overcome the apparent contradiction of a strong regime atop a weak state.

B. CHAPTER 2: STATE NEGLECT & INFORMAL CAIRO

With this background in place, the focus shifted to the Cairo case which further indicated that while the Egyptian state may rule Egyptian society, its governance is (at best) intermittent. The city's political centrality has narrowed official attention to issues of security; those of urban management have been relatively ignored. This indifference is evident, for example, with respect to the state's failure to accommodate the city's considerable growth since the 1950s, with expanded housing and services. Instead, its shelter policies tended to benefit the elite and upper-income groups, and disproportionately harmed entrants to the housing market. Crucially, the failure of successive governments to sanction new subdivisions led to substantial land-price inflation.

Beginning in the 1960s, however, Cairo's demographic pressure found a partial outlet in unsanctioned development on the city's agricultural periphery. When taken together with neighbourhoods established on public land, informal communities in Cairo constitute well over half the city's housing. The *'ashwa'iyyat* discourse notwithstanding, they are hence hardly marginal. Yet western observers sometimes made the similar mistake of investing them with too much autonomy as expressions of popular agency. Such valorizations fail to account for their *de facto* integration with the larger city, both with respect to service provision and the indirect rule of state-linked notables.

More importantly, however, claims of social pathology and popular agency ignored the Egyptian state's ambiguous role in informal Cairo's genesis and development. While its officials are sometimes portrayed as having been taken by surprise by the phenomenon in the 1990s, the view that emerges both from domestic reportage and the western consultancy literature is of state agencies generally trying to ignore such communities—sometimes refusing to service them on the grounds that they are illegal encroachments, but otherwise making little effort to sanction their growth.

So despite periodic talk of demolition and other sanctions, informal communities in Cairo have generally been left alone. Removals tend to be small-scale and have had scant impact on the sector's growth since the 1970s. While various factors have been cited to explain the absence of sanctions, perhaps the most salient is simply the lack of alternative accommodation for those who would be displaced in any large-scale clearance of the *'ashwa'iyyat*—and the state's unwillingness to risk large-scale removals without it.

Yet the demolition issue hardly exhausts the complexities of the state's involvement. While such communities have been routinely described as illegal in the *'ashwa'iyyat* discourse, the complexities of land law, custom and contemporary practice mean that the status of any given community is far more likely to be ambiguous and disputed. In some cases, state agencies may have even tacitly permitted informal settlements—in one instance even selling off public land—as a source of cheap housing for the poor.



The final aspect of the state's problematic involvement in informal Cairo was the issue of upgrading. While the main thrust of the Egyptian state's interventions since 1992 has supposedly been in this direction, such initiatives actually go back several decades. Although one senior government official privately opined that by the mid 1990s the problems of the *'ashwa'iyyat* had been solved, there remained considerable ambiguity as to the actual extent of upgrading as well as its sustainability. Hence the on-going state-society relationship might be best understood as one where perpetually cash-strapped state officials seek justifications to ration services. As always, the relationship is mediated by the clientelist calculus whereby officials seek to maximise their personal discretion and the political benefits of service provision.

### 7.1.2 PART B: DONOR INTERVENTIONS IN CAIRO, 1974-1998

At this point, the focus of the thesis shifted from domestic state-society relations to the efforts of western donors from the mid-1970s onward to upgrade some of Cairo's informal areas, help plan the city's future growth and supply backbone infrastructure.

#### A. CHAPTER 3: INTRODUCTION TO PART B

Consideration of the international dimension was crucial, in part because the asserted linkage between regime type and state capacity had yet to be fully established. Contemporary Egypt has been burdened with the historical legacies of uneven development, which have indisputably had a constraining effect on state capacity. Hence the indifference of state officials to informal Cairo might be understood more generally along the lines of Karl Marx's observation that "mankind always takes up only such problems as it can solve," rather than specifically with respect to the exigencies of the post-1952 dispensation.<sup>8</sup>

The donor-intervention case studies provided a means of focusing on the effects of regime-type, in part because they diminished the significance of domestic resource constraints as an explanatory factor. Moreover, the projects they described sought to foster an *administratively competent* Egyptian state able to govern and manage its capital. Their meagre results constituted the final major problematic of the thesis:

*Why were western donors unable to increase the Egyptian state's governance capacities vis-à-vis informal Cairo?*

Once again, the question admits a tentative answer. The failure of donors to bolster the administrative competence of the Egyptian state through policy reform was, at least in part, a consequence of the logic of authoritarian power relations. While donor initiatives were sometimes successful as construction projects, the logic of neglectful rule proved highly resistant to reform. Egyptian agencies repeatedly

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<sup>8</sup> Karl Marx (1971) *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Lawrence & Wishart: 21.

frustrated and rebuffed donor efforts to foster a more capable state linked to a more mobilized society. Although the US government, in particular, sought to leverage its demands by means of conditionalities, Washington's own objectives in aiding Egypt undermined such tactics and, ironically, reinforced the Egyptian tendency to confuse infrastructure provision with state capacity.

#### B. CHAPTER 4: THE POLITICS OF UPGRADING

The first generation of urban-development initiatives attempted in Cairo—World Bank's Manshiet Nasser project and AID's Helwan intervention—began in the late 1970s and continued through the mid to late 1980s. They were both neighbourhood-upgrading programmes, with the Helwan intervention including a housing-construction component as well. Both also included a regularization element with the aim of using the receipts to recover at least some of the costs of the upgrading; the Helwan housing component was to be similarly self-funding. The processes were intended to become, at least in part, self-sustaining— not dependent on Egyptian state revenues. Other policy-reform elements—such as reduced standards to minimize construction costs—were intended to facilitate cost-recovery. Both projects, moreover, entailed institutional reform insofar as they would be implemented in conjunction with a new housing-ministry agency (the EAJP) committed to the cost-recovery agenda.

The Manshiet Nasser and Helwan upgrading were relatively successful at providing services, but they failed as demonstration projects for replication elsewhere and had little impact on state shelter policies. While the World Bank and AID shared some of the blame for these consequences, more politically interesting are the ways in which various Egyptian state agencies assiduously blocked policy-reform efforts. For example, they rejected any reduction in construction standards, further describing owner-builder housing as little better than a "planned slum."<sup>9</sup> The donors discovered, moreover, that the Cairo governorate, not the EAJP, had the actual control over land. The former effectively sabotaged the regularization programme which—when combined with the rejection of owner-builder housing—meant that there was little cost recovery. Indeed, EAJP had never secured legal approval to reuse funds recovered in these projects elsewhere. On the ground meanwhile, Egyptian officials sought to contain and control any measure of bottom-up mobilization or community participation.

While it is probably dangerous to focus on only one explanation for the demise of the Manshiet Nasser and Helwan programmes, a key element was that donor-advocated policy reforms, if successful, would have allowed informal communities to house and service themselves legally without need for regular infusions of state patronage. Egyptian state agencies, by contrast, were defending the model whereby housing and services were distributed top-down without accountability.

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<sup>9</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 19.

C. CHAPTER 5: THE POLITICS OF PLANNING

At the same time as the upgrading projects were getting underway and beginning to encounter problems, donors were also engaging with the broader issue of Cairo's future growth. The next case study took up a series of essentially unsuccessful planning and urban development exercises which sought an alternative to the informal land development process then at its height on the city periphery.

Because of the relative scarcity of arable land in Egypt, development plans since the 1960s—and especially since Sadat's 1974 initiative—had favoured the urbanization of the desert. Yet again, the promise of a bespoke development project separate from the existing urban fabric substituted for engaging with the immediate problems of Cairo and other cities. By contrast, western planners were sceptical that such new cities could be affordably developed *de novo*. They proposed a number of less ambitious initiatives whereby the Egyptian state and donors would guide Cairo's future urbanization away from arable land and increase the state's capacity to manage the nearby desert land to which it would be re-located.

These initiatives included the 1982 NUPS which recommended the development of satellite cities on the Cairo desert periphery, as well as measures to attract those who otherwise homestead informally. In the early 1980s, the GOPP enlisted the German aid agency GTZ to help develop the satellite city of El-Obour on Cairo's north-eastern periphery, part of the larger re-orientation of the city's growth. About the same time, the World Bank sought to initiate the EMS programme, explicitly aimed at creating a desert alternative to the informal housing sector. It proposed the planning and servicing of a series of sites for owner-built housing equivalent to the amount of arable land being informally consumed at that time. By far the most ambitious of these exercises, however, was the Franco-Egyptian Greater Cairo Region Master Scheme which also entailed the creation of affordable 'new settlements' on the desert periphery.

Few of these initiatives, however, were anything more than paper exercises. NUPS was rejected, upon submission, and the master plan was never systematically implemented. Similar to the first-generation projects, EMS was rejected by the Cairo governorate as state-sponsored slum building. The new-settlements element of the Scheme was similarly undermined by the bureaucracy's *de facto* disinterest in low-income housing. More politically interesting, however, was that the efforts to develop El-Obour, EMS and the new settlements were also blocked by other elements of the Egyptian state—particularly the military—which either controlled the land in question or had an effective veto over its use. Not only did the armed forces have substantial land-development ambitions of their own, some western consultants suspected that the reconstruction ministry sought to use the projects to gain access to their holdings. Hence the demise of attempts to replan Cairo seems to have had much to do with a politics of land speculation.

#### D. CHAPTER 6: THE POLITICS OF WASTEWATER

Having looked at site-specific upgrading and more general city planning, the final case study dealt with the provision of metropolitan-level services, focusing on the GCWWP and a follow-on ODA programme. Although not explicitly dealing with informal Cairo, the GCWWP has had more impact on it than all the previous initiatives taken together.

Unquestionably the Cairo sewer system needed substantial upgrading and modernization as Cairo's tremendous post-war growth had created wastewater flows well in excess of the system's capacity. This surcharging led to considerable flooding with serious consequences for public health and order. The city's growth had also resulted in the development of substantial unserved (and hence usually informal) areas, again with serious health consequences.

The GCWWP was successful insofar as it was basically a construction project, implemented by a consortium of western construction contractors in cooperation with the specially created CWO. Project implementation was relatively unproblematic, especially on the west bank of the Nile where AID's comprehensive works meant that there was little direct Egyptian involvement. By the mid-1980s, the project had substantially reduced sewage flooding on both banks. AID funding, moreover, provided local connections to some two million Egyptians in predominantly informal areas.

The project, however, faced sustainability problems. AID attempted to require that GOSD be able to recover its costs from wastewater and gain a sufficient degree of autonomy and competence to operate and maintain the completed works, but was repeatedly rebuffed. The failure of these efforts ended further involvement in GCWWP infrastructure construction. Not only is GOSD's capacity to operate and maintain the system unclear, the absence of further donor investment in sewerage—at least on the west bank—means that the percentage of Cairenes living in unsewered areas has begun to increase once more.

Moreover from the outset of the GCWWP, the extent of new servicing on the east bank had been substantially less. Hence in the 1990s, ODA proposed to connect two impoverished informal neighbourhoods in a southern district of the Cairo governorate to the wastewater network. Yet their proposal was packaged in a language of bottom-up social mobilization that Egyptian state agencies likely found unpalatable. The official commitment to upgrading notwithstanding, they preferred projects in more affluent neighbourhoods. Hence issues of political control and favouritism complicated the provision of services to informal communities.

## 7.2 EXPLAINING THE POLITICS OF INACTION & NEGLECT

The discussion now moves to the five main problematics with which the thesis has been concerned. This section begins with a discussion of the first two, the absence of clearances and upgrading. It then takes up the political significance of the *‘ashwa’iyyat* discourse and further proceeds to an examination of the failure of donor-backed reform efforts. The section concludes with a discussion of the infrastructural weakness of the Egyptian state, the durability of the post-1952 order and the role of international aid in resolving the contradiction.

### 7.2.1 THE ABSENCE OF CLEARANCES

The first research puzzle was the apparent reluctance of successive governments to remove informal areas despite, especially in the 1990s, a public discourse which represented them as a grave threat to Egypt’s moral, social and political health. Most straightforwardly, the Egyptian state’s interventions in the supposedly disorderly zones of its capital have been constrained by its inability to rehouse the 6-7 million Cairenes who inhabit them. Such generalizations do not mean that state agencies will never exercise the demolition option or mitigate the predatory exactions of state officials in *sha’bi* neighbourhoods. Rather the logic of risk avoidance—occasional indications of ‘spatial war’ notwithstanding—precludes the large-scale use of despotic power against informal Cairo. Removals and predations are unlikely to be so widespread as to be demographically significant.

While such constraints point to a lack of public resources and Egypt’s long-term underdevelopment, the informal-urbanization process itself suggests that there was little capital shortage in the housing sector at least through the mid 1980s. Hence other factors are at least as salient, including the heavy subsidies on public housing which both inflates demand and constricts supply. Politically, they likely reflect a degree of state-society disengagement—the state’s apparent inability to extract revenue from would-be homebuyers—as well as clientelism, in that elites have tended to monopolize such resources as the state has been able to provide.

Hence the difficulty of top-down intervention is only part of the explanation for informal Cairo’s endurance. To focus purely on the state’s apparent toleration of it is to overstate the extent to which “the state is in one place and informality is in the other.”<sup>10</sup> In some cases, for example “El Tayibin” and the ‘Ayn Shams and Matariyya neighbourhoods (2.5.3B), housing informality has its origins in the weaknesses of state regulatory capacities; the exigencies of clientelism; and the opacities characteristic of an autocratic and informalized state. In other cases, most obviously Manshiet Nasser, informal neighbourhoods were established with tacit sanction. In general they are useful, because: “they accommodate cheap waged labour subsidized by low-cost housing and provide basic necessities such as

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<sup>10</sup> Elyachar (2003): 576.

affordable land and rents, and food.”<sup>11</sup> More specifically, giving tacit approval for particular neighbourhoods may allow the state to dispense with social-contract obligations to house the urban poor.<sup>12</sup> Most particularly, the growth of at least one neighbourhood—Izbat al-Haggana—reflects the patrimonial disposition of public assets for more private gain.

Thus the political order does not merely constrain the state’s ability to intervene in the urban fabric, it is also a condition of possibility for the informal sector and its putative pathologies. Perhaps most importantly, the informal housing sector’s growth has been driven by shortages of land officially sanctioned for urbanization. Such scarcities are not merely a consequence of inadequate resources for new subdivisions, but reflect the elite’s monopolization of formal neighbourhoods like Nasr city and Muhandisin. Other state policies are significant. The tendency of state agencies to build on arable land, rather than protect it, encourages informal developers to ‘piggy-back’. Most interestingly, efforts by western planners to expand the availability of planned and serviced land—a *sine qua non* of any serious attempt to redirect the growth of informal Cairo—were defeated both by official indifference to self-built housing and official land speculation. Hence at the micro- and macro-levels, the informal housing sector is a result of the exclusionary and patrimonial character of post-1952 politics. Its top-down informality has—to a significant extent—informalized Egyptian society.

## 7.2.2 THE ABSENCE OF DEVELOPMENT

Yet the absence of systematic demolitions is only one part of the Cairo puzzle. The informal housing sector’s endurance is also a consequence of the Egyptian state’s failure to upgrade it systematically. Once again, resource constraints cannot be ignored; no government since 1952 has had the means to transform Cairo into a ‘Paris on the Nile’. Especially since the 1970s, however, such explanations have become less than fully convincing. Short of a total transformation, donors have offered—and often provided—substantial resources for the upgrading, planning and servicing of the city.

A perhaps more significant part of the explanation is the reluctance of state agencies and officials to accept the inevitability of the urbanization processes underway and engage with them as such. Their public stance has been described as “rigidity in legislation and reluctance in enforcement,”<sup>13</sup> resulting in:

the worst of all possibilities: the agricultural land *does* get converted anyway, but through an unplanned process [...] This is the real problem with urban expansion on agricultural land around Cairo: that although illegal, the pressures of Cairo's growth are so strong that the State cannot

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<sup>11</sup> Bayat & Denis (2000): 193.

<sup>12</sup> El Kadi (1988): 35; see also, Fahmy (2004): 603.

<sup>13</sup> SUBE et al. (1994): 25.

stop it. But *since* it is illegal the State cannot recognize it and begin to accommodate it with even minimal measures.<sup>14</sup>

The Egyptian rejection of donor demands for a more flexible approach has often been framed in the language of top-down modernism. But such claims are not entirely credible in the broader context whereby informality is generally tolerated and even selectively encouraged. Instead, a somewhat different set of reasons for official intransigence seem more plausible. For example, regularization or official recognition more generally would deny state officials the legal pretexts needed to ration the distribution of scarce infrastructure. It would undermine the informal relationships of discretion, creating some of the conditions of possibility for homesteaders to make public demands. Indeed, working with existing communities would entail securing their consent, suggesting a measure of state-society engagement and explicit bargaining relationships. The logic of state-society disengagement is particularly evident in official opposition, however rationalized, to cost-recovered upgrading, which further suggests the taxation-representation linkage that Egyptian governments have strenuously sought to avoid.

Hence donor-backed upgrading programmes—as well as planning projects that proposed self-built desert housing—failed, in part, because they were implicitly predicated on the logic of dealing with the *sha'ab* as citizens with rights and responsibilities, as opposed to as clients seeking protection and favour. Rather than allow a measure of bottom-up socio-political organization or social mobilization, state authorities have been more willing to tolerate informality. Not only did they obstruct projects underway, they closed the door on such proposed initiatives as AID's UDS programme and the World Bank's EMS initiative which would have included substantial new resources for the upgrading and replanning of informal Cairo.

The character of the political order in contemporary Egypt has obstructed urban development initiatives in other ways. The redirection of informal homesteading into the desert failed, in part, because the desert land around Cairo was far too valuable to be wasted on housing the masses. A similar example of the political constraints on upgrading, albeit on a far smaller scale, is evident from the case of the Cairo Poverty Alleviation project. The British effort to provide local wastewater connections was apparently blocked not just by the NGO issue but also by the relative insignificance of the areas to be serviced and the project's failure to offer sufficient spoils to local politicians. While it would be an overstatement to conclude that all such local servicing projects are hence impossible, political constraints clearly limit the extent to which western donors can provide local servicing and make large-scale infrastructure projects benefit particular areas.

The final example of the political factors constraining informal Cairo's upgrading is evident in the GCWWP's sustainability problems. The Mubarak government was

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<sup>14</sup> Sims (1990): 31 [*emphasis in the original*].

unwilling to attempt the politically sensitive task of charging wastewater producers. Institutional reform and efforts to instil professional competence contradicted the use of state agencies as vehicles for patronage-through-employment. Not only does this stand-off between AID and the Egyptian government mean that the network's future is uncertain, the resulting end of direct AID involvement likely meant the end of its expansion—jeopardizing the sustainability of servicing on the west bank.

So although projects like the GCWWP have made a substantial contribution to Cairo's quality of everyday life, the relative lack of post-1992 upgrading—even in the Islamist stronghold of Munira Gharbiyya—suggests that such initiatives have done little for the underlying capacities of the Egyptian state. Indeed, such nominally successful interventions are little more than a *façade*, behind which lurks a neglectful and incompetent state.

### 7.2.3 THE POLITICS OF PATHOLOGY

Successive Egyptian governments have likely dealt with the difficulties of intervening in informal Cairo, their own complicity in its emergence and the *de facto* utility of such neighbourhoods—by ignoring it as far as possible. Yet such a state-society relationship was perhaps unsustainable in the wake of the earthquake and the Mubarak government's confrontation with the 'Islamic Republic of Imbaba'. If nothing else, the putative pathologies of the *'ashwa'iyyat* discourse would appear to be too threatening to ignore.

Still, the significance of informal Cairo's new visibility should not be exaggerated. While the *'ashwa'iyyat* literature bears a superficial resemblance to the discourses of urban reform often observed in city planning and management in the West, these are historically most meaningful when linked to urban reform movements emanating out of civil society.<sup>15</sup> In the state-dominated Egyptian context, by contrast, Egyptian civil society had little involvement apart from elite charities and activist campaigns against clearances. Perhaps more importantly, the Mubarak government managed to restore control in Munira Gharbiyya and elsewhere, largely through despotic means. Hence it is probably more interesting to examine what other functions the *'ashwa'iyyat* discourse may serve besides informing and justifying state policy.

For example, Singerman suggests that it reflected the broader anxieties of the Egyptian elite—which faced both the Islamist challenge and more general stresses of economic adjustment and modernization—in the early 1990s.<sup>16</sup> In this respect, its ultimate significance may have been as a justification for the elite exodus to the

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<sup>15</sup> Robert A. Beauregard (1996) "Between Modernity and Postmodernity: The Ambiguous Position of US Planning" in Scott Campbell & Susan Fainstein eds., *Readings in Planning Theory*. Blackwell Publishers: 214-5, 220; M. Christine Boyer (1983) *Dreaming the Rational City: The Myth of American City Planning*. MIT Press: 127-36.

<sup>16</sup> Singerman (1999): 10.



desert periphery and hence the intensification of Cairo's spatial segregation.<sup>17</sup> Ironically, such discourses may also contribute to reproduction of indifference. The strategy of 'othering' can serve to justify the relations of exclusion intrinsic to the political order, as well as the specific denial of state services to informal neighbourhoods.<sup>18</sup> As it is sometimes reproduced at the popular level, official vilification might be understood as yet another means of atomizing the *sha'ab*.<sup>19</sup>

Most specifically, Petra Kuppinger has argued that the *'ashwa'iyyat* discourse provided the Mubarak government with a means of deflecting the increased public concern that followed the earthquake and clashes with militants, onto informal Cairo as a kind of scapegoat. The *'ashwa'iyyat* discourse is thus less a rupture from feigned ignorance of the informal and more an adaptation of the politics of neglect to changing circumstances. This discursive tactic parallels the Mubarak government's broader attempt to marginalize Islamist militants as aberrations in an otherwise largely healthy social body. Indeed, the two operations became so linked that:

physical informality by implication became the basis or breeding ground for social and political dangers. [...] The language of informality [...] afforded a most suitable idiom that avoided direct references to Islamic groups and activities. Political threats were euphemized as physical deterioration.<sup>20</sup>

In this context, the *'ashwa'iyyat* discourse is most significant with respect to the Mubarak government's overall efforts to quell the Islamist insurgency throughout Egypt, and as an attempt to depoliticize the insurgency as a product of the environment. In Kuppinger's view, this tactic "at least momentarily, released authorities from having to argue directly against Islamic groups and possibly offending religious sentiments of many citizens."<sup>21</sup> Such considerations suggest the role of risk avoidance, but indicate that the discourse is somewhat extraneous to informal Cairo. For all these reasons, the Mubarak government's post-1992 neglect of it becomes less surprising.

#### 7.2.4 RESISTANCE TO REFORM

Having noted the complexities of the Egyptian state's neglectful rule, it now makes sense to place it in international context. Its tenacity has been manifest in donor failure to achieve the sustainable upgrading of Cairo's underserved and sometimes impoverished informal neighbourhoods, the rational planning of the city's growth and the sustainable servicing of both formal and informal areas.

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<sup>17</sup> Bayat & Denis (2000): 197; see also, Denis (forthcoming).

<sup>18</sup> For example, see Taher (1997b): 17; more generally, see Perlman (1976): 248.

<sup>19</sup> Singerman (1999): 31; for example, see Ghannam (2002): 70-3; see also, Perlman (1976): 248.

<sup>20</sup> Kuppinger (2001): 199-200.

<sup>21</sup> Kuppinger (2001): 200.

Despite the substantial resources at their disposal, the World Bank, AID and others proved unable to foster an administratively competent Egyptian state capable of intervening in Egyptian society in the face of opposition from agencies and officials.

Of course it is important to acknowledge that responsibility does not fall entirely on the Egyptian side. Donors and their consultants have been, albeit in retrospect, often highly critical of their own approaches. For example, the World Bank's Manshiet Nasser audit admitted that the Bank had significantly misdiagnosed the problems the upgrading was intended to address.<sup>22</sup> The discussion of the Helwan project makes clear that it was essentially a large construction project with social and institutional development elements tacked on. A consultant associated with the World Bank's EMS project felt that its failure was linked to the consultants' failure to develop a good working relationship with the Cairo governorate. Few of the French project managers of the IAURIF Master Scheme are now willing to defend its centre-piece, the homogenous-sectors element. Indeed, donor misjudgements figure in even relatively successful projects; the infrastructure-heavy character of the GCWWP resulted, at least in part, from the British government's primary interest in supporting a national construction company to build the deep spine tunnel.

More broadly, the political context in which the donors worked is a crucial part for understanding the limited results of their endeavours. Egypt's diplomatic and strategic significance to donors has meant that the importance of having an aid relationship with Cairo often outweighed its substantive results. Hence in its early stages, World-Bank consultants were urged to undertake a larger project than they thought was justified. The protracted French involvement with master planning in Cairo seems to have resulted from the ambition of Paris-region politicians to play an international role. Such considerations have been particularly evident in US-backed endeavours, as much aimed at providing visible signs of commitment as achieving particular goals. Indeed, the sheer size of the Washington-Cairo aid relationship led to projects intended, at least in part, to reduce the backlog of unspent funds. Not only perhaps wasteful, such spending fostered a kind of edifice complex at odds with the ideal of administrative competence.

Yet the significance of these factors should not be overstated. The GCWWP was deliberately intended by donors to be an expensive aid-consuming construction project, but was nonetheless quite successful in achieving the immediate goal of reducing sewage inundations. Rather in every case of project failure, the Egyptian defence of neglectful authoritarianism against donor reforms has been a crucial part of the explanation. AID's post-mortem on the Helwan debacle seems to acknowledge this kind of point:

Donors cannot "buy" policy change even when the amount of funding is substantial. Policy change comes about only when the host country is convinced of the wisdom of policy change as it applies to their own

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<sup>22</sup> World Bank (1986): 4-6.

political, economic and social condition. In Egypt these conditions never developed.”<sup>23</sup>

Egyptian resistance may be further understood in terms of the “means of political production” through which public resources have been converted into private wealth.<sup>24</sup> There are some indications of this dynamic in the Helwan and Manshiet Nasser projects, including the apparent misappropriation of finished housing sites by government agencies and EAJP protests over AID prohibitions on the use of Egyptian contractors. By contrast, the evidence of spoils politics is much more substantive in urban-planning cases where land speculation on the part of state agencies played a major role in their failure. In the GCWWP, the record is again more ambiguous. The removal of EGYCON from the project suggests the subterranean competition for spoils, yet there is little evidence that it compromised implementation. The patronage demands of Egyptian politicians may have helped derail the South Cairo wastewater project.

At least as significant, however, were issues of administrative reform. Virtually every project under consideration included measures to make state agencies more competent owners of infrastructure, efficient providers of services and rational managers of their public assets. As already noted, however, efforts to boost productivity and efficiency in GOSD clearly contradicted the established practice of using the bureaucracy as a source of job creation. Moreover, the politics of land speculation clearly depended on a substantial degree of opacity with respect to land management; donor reform efforts in this area were unlikely to be welcomed.

Indeed, the Egyptian resistance to administrative reform is evident in their use of bureaucratic dualism—in this case, the fragmentation of responsibility between the agencies which work with the donors and which have actual operational responsibility—to contain western reform efforts.<sup>25</sup> When the World Bank and AID worked with the EAJP in Helwan and Manshiet Nasser, real authority to approve projects and land-use decisions was reserved for the governorates. Similarly, while GTZ and IAURIF worked with the GOPP, real power was in the hands of governorates. Finally, while the donors involved in the GCWWP worked with CWO, actual responsibility for the network remained with CGOSD.

While the desire of state officials to avoid engaging with Egyptian society and preserve its clientelization has already been discussed, it remains relevant here. A competent state implies a mobilized society which has secured the right to make demands, for example on the basis of paying taxes or their equivalent, and is organized to bargain. The implementation and replicability of the Manshiet Nasser and Helwan upgrading projects depended on such a transformed state-society relationship. Similarly, the sustainability of the GCWWP works depended on a

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<sup>23</sup> Gardner & Van Huyck (1990): 13.

<sup>24</sup> Moore (1994): 122-3.

<sup>25</sup> Such dualism has been noted elsewhere, see Jean-François Bayart (2000) “Africa in the World: a History of Extraversion,” *African Affairs*, 99, No. 395 (April): 229-30.

degree of revenue extraction that was deemed to be politically unfeasible. Again, the South Cairo wastewater project sought to increase the capacity of local government through the NGO-mediated mobilization of informal communities.

So the Cairo case may be taken as a useful qualifier to Springborg's claim that students and practitioners of democratization have neglected efforts to improve public administration in favour of an "infatuation with civil society led models of democratization."<sup>26</sup> Even prior to the recent emphasis on democratization, donors in Egypt have been quite sensitive to the need for institution-building. Seemingly technocratic issues of sewerage O&M and land management may nonetheless have a political context which subverts reform. If immobilism, neglect and indifference are key to the logic of authoritarian power relations, then administrative reform is no less a challenge to the post-1952 dispensation than the more conventionally salient issues of human rights, civil-society capacity building and multi-party elections.

### 7.2.5 INFRASTRUCTURAL POWER & INTERNATIONAL AID

Regardless of their meagre results with respect to policy reform, the urban development project case studies also indicate the important role of international assistance in defusing the apparent contradiction between the durability of the post-1952 political order and infrastructural weaknesses of the state upon which it rests.

As Charles Tilly and others have noted, western penetration of the developing world forestalled any repetition of the characteristic western pattern of state- and nation-building whereby interventionist states became linked to mobilized societies through systems of representation and mediation. Instead, the exigencies of European (and later American) penetration, control and economic integration fostered relations of dependence where the infrastructural power of the core helped prop up local rulers by means of military interventions, aid and trade.<sup>27</sup>

In this context, donor patronage since the 1970s can be seen as having allowed Egypt's rulers to preside over a state manifestly incapable of governing Egyptian society. The relatively unsuccessful upgrading initiatives reflected the efforts of Washington and its allies to shore up the Sadat government—both symbolically by providing highly visible projects and more concretely by providing goods and services to strategically placed but potentially restive communities. A similar rationale is evident in the far more substantial GCWPP which, along with all its

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Springborg (2005a): 13.

<sup>27</sup> Tilly (1992): 192-226; see also Robert H. Jackson & Carl G. Rosberg (1985) "The Marginality of African States" in Gwendolen M. Carter & Patrick O'Meara eds., *African Independence: the First Twenty-Five Years*. Indiana University Press: 45-70; Ian S. Lustick (1996) "The Absence of Middle Eastern Greater Powers: Political "Backwardness" in Historical Perspective," *International Organization*, 51, 4 (Autumn): 653-83.

health and environmental benefits, helped ameliorate a significant source of discontent. Such interventions may well be the source of much of the infrastructure presently found in Cairo's informal neighbourhoods. In so doing, they represent an important part of the clientelization of Egyptian society.

More generally, substantial infusions of western aid—and with it expatriate engineers and consultants—have allowed Egypt's rulers to dispense with the development of a technically competent and locally employed professional class which could have eventually become a check on exercise of autocracy. While many of the contracts for the various Cairo projects were ultimately subcontracted to local Egyptian companies or carried out by joint ventures, and local Egyptian staff were involved throughout, their participation was usually mediated by donors and consultants. Hence it seems to have had few implications for the bureaucracy's operational competence and has not led to the institutionalization of professionalism domestically.<sup>28</sup>

### 7.3 THE POLITICS OF NEGLECT IN CONTEXT

In addressing the problematics of the Egyptian state in Cairo, this thesis has addressed a number of issues of interest even to those with little obvious concern for the city. While not formally comparative—in the sense of multiple country case studies—the thesis nonetheless speaks implicitly to a number of broader issues with respect to the study of politics, the Middle East and contemporary Egypt. The final section of this final chapter explicitly spells out these contributions.

#### 7.3.1 STATE CAPACITY & REGIME TYPE

The examination of the Egyptian state's neglectful rule of Cairo suggests a need to rethink the notion of modern states as fundamentally "transformative" and relentlessly seeking to expand the scope of their top-down social control.<sup>29</sup> Such claims, perhaps most systematically articulated by Joel Migdal in his *Strong Societies and Weak States*, are premised on a view of states and societies as analytically autonomous. Migdal ignores the possibility that regime type might play a crucial mediating role in state-society relations. Instead, he sees state inaction or incompetence simply as weakness, for example as a consequence of bottom-up resistance from local power-holders.<sup>30</sup>

Migdal is not alone in his reluctance to engage with issues of political order.<sup>31</sup> While obviously aware of the issue, Roger Owen's standard textbook *State Power and*

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<sup>28</sup> Hence perpetuating the pattern of clientelist relations observed by Moore (1994): 166-88.

<sup>29</sup> For a critique of Migdal on this point, see Cammack (1992): 12-20.

<sup>30</sup> Migdal (1988): 33-41.

<sup>31</sup> For example, Tilly (1992): 96-126; see also Mann (1988): 5-9.

*Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* focuses simply on “a huge expansion in the power and pervasiveness of the state apparatus [...] in the post-independence Middle East” without ever considering to what end.<sup>32</sup> In part, Owen may be more concerned with making an argument about the modernity of the region’s contemporary states, against claims of an unchanging ‘Oriental despotism’.<sup>33</sup> Other observers may have been so focused on the power struggles within such states—ironically over-sensitive to their dispensations of power—that they failed to think through the states’ striking inability to do much.<sup>34</sup>

Notable exceptions to this general picture include Timothy Mitchell’s well-known deconstruction of the notion of state autonomy.<sup>35</sup> More importantly, the late Nazih Ayubi made a limited attempt—at the very end of his substantial *Over-stating the State*—to distinguish between “strong” and “fierce” states.<sup>36</sup> Arguing that the region’s hard autocracies lacked the capacity to “penetrate” or “integrate” the societies they ruled, he maintained that they were violent precisely because they were weak.<sup>37</sup>

This thesis has sought to build upon Ayubi’s thumb-nail sketch of “states which have ‘annexed’ parts of society and the economy ‘from the outside’, without penetrating the society at large.”<sup>38</sup> Its discussion of authoritarian power relations coupled with neglectful rule has sought to elaborate on the state ‘annexation’ of key sectors in the context of a more general disengagement. On the one hand, Egypt’s post-1952 rulers have consistently sought to break down autonomous sources of social power. Crucial to the process of annexation, of course, has been the state’s control of the domestic economy as the basis for the systematic clientelization of society. While such despotic measures have long helped secure the personal power of Nasser and his successors—whose vulnerabilities, if any, came from rivals from within the political elite rather than from below—durable authoritarianism has been at the cost of the state’s continuing externality from much of Egyptian society.

Hence its unilateral control has been limited to the “main axes” of society and thereafter, more likely, predicated on intermediaries.<sup>39</sup> Such controls have not been sufficient to mobilize or administer the agrarian and urban sectors. So state development initiatives—whether Nasser’s high dam, Sadat’s new desert cities or

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<sup>32</sup> Owen (2000): 27; see also Owen (2000): 5.

<sup>33</sup> Owen (2000): 5, 17-20.

<sup>34</sup> Vatikiotis (1978), for example, virtually ignores the subject of policy-making except to suggest occasionally that there was relatively little of it.

<sup>35</sup> Timothy Mitchell (1991) “The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics,” *American Political Science Review*, 85, 1 (March): 77-96.

<sup>36</sup> Ayubi (1995): 449.

<sup>37</sup> Ayubi (1995): 447-8, 450.

<sup>38</sup> Ayubi (1995): 447.

<sup>39</sup> Roussillon (1998): 390; see also, Mamoun Fandy (1998) “Political Science Without Clothes: The Politics of Dress or Contesting the Spatiality of the State in Egypt,” *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 20, 2 (Spring): 88.

land reclamation—have been self-contained projects and failed to provide the larger society with needed modernization, investment and reform. Indeed at least part of their rationale—apart from the self-absorbed nature of patronage politics—seems to have been to divert attention from the state’s routine immobilism. Hence the state’s characteristic mode of rule has been largely that of neglect, coupled with intermittent top-down distribution along clientelist lines. While donor-funded initiatives from the 1970s onwards provided new (and sometimes significant) resources for distribution, they failed to have much impact on the overarching context of indifference.

So, in contrast to Migdal’s view, an absence of top-down interventions is not a general indication of political weakness. While they may reflect an infrastructural power deficit, inaction and incompetence may also be diagnostic—at the level of regime—of the viability of authoritarian power relations. In part because of the availability of Great-Power patronage, a durable post-1952 regime has been embedded in a relatively weak state.

### 7.3.2 PRAETORIANISM & ‘ENCLAVIZATION’

Over the last eight years, Springborg has suggested that the Egyptian state continues to be civilianized. Although highly qualified and nuanced, his view is that the 1990s were marked by a gradual diminution of the Egyptian military’s economic and political weight.<sup>40</sup> This thesis—while admittedly offering only a very localized perspective and largely covering the prior period—advises even further caution. While the top-ranks have become less officer-laden in recent years, Cairo’s three governorates continue to be ‘militarized’ in the sense that they remain staffed, at least in part, by retired police and military officers. Perhaps the officer corps and the security services have simply lowered their public visibility, concealing their footholds in nominally civilian sectors of the administration.

The Egyptian military’s role in the land speculation on Cairo’s desert periphery illustrates Springborg’s thesis of the “enclavization” of Egypt’s armed forces, their transformation into a quasi-corporate force with important economic interests.<sup>41</sup> Yet the process seems hardly demobilizing and might rather indicate just how tenaciously the officer corps will defend what amounts to a ‘state within the state’—a point perhaps less considered in predictions of their gradual decline. Their deflection of Kafrawi’s efforts to secure control of Cairo’s desert periphery was perhaps part of the process by which the military reasserted the position it had lost under Sadat and was given resources formerly controlled by his inner circle.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Springborg (2003b); (1998); Robert Springborg & John Sfakianakis (2001) “The Military’s Role in Presidential Succession” in May Chartouni-Dubarry ed., *Armée et nation en Égypte: pouvoir politique, pouvoir militaire*, les notes de l’ifri - no 31. Institut français des relations internationales: esp. 60-2.

<sup>41</sup> Springborg (1998): 4-8.

<sup>42</sup> Henry & Springborg (2001): 154; Springborg (1989): 97-8.

While obviously less important than its role as presidential king-maker and less of a spoil than the substantial portion of the Egyptian economy which it is said to control, nonetheless the military's development of the Cairo periphery has had a profound impact on the city's shape and growth. It is a very material indication of its power.

### 7.3.3 THE US-EGYPT AID RELATIONSHIP

The thesis also adds depth and clarity to the scholarly literature on relations between Egypt and the donors, most notably Washington, who have supported it since the 1970s; it may also guard against polemical exaggeration. At the risk of overgeneralization, previous studies of the aid relationship have often focused mainly on the agrarian *qua* productive sectors of the economy.<sup>43</sup> While not insensitive to the Egyptian side of the relationship, some have been largely concerned with the view from the American Embassy.<sup>44</sup> Other commentators have sometimes caricatured the relationship as infringing on Egypt's sovereignty, harming ordinary Egyptians and largely benefiting the US corporations which bid on aid contracts.<sup>45</sup>

By contrast, this thesis has sought to look at how urban consumption-orientated projects have actually worked on the ground. They are politically significant because consumption, rather than production, is the more significant mediating element in the economic sphere of Egyptian state-society relations. Issues of housing, service and infrastructure provision, moreover, are key parts of the state's top-down clientelization of Egyptian society. While the US-Egypt aid relationship is open to multiple interpretations, here it has been used as a window into the otherwise opaque institutions of the Egyptian state, and the workings of authoritarianism and neglectful rule. The substantial amounts of data collected by donors and their consultants—and often willingly supplied by Egyptian officials in the hope of securing aid projects—offer a proxy device for asking questions and making arguments which would not otherwise be possible.

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<sup>43</sup> For example, see Sadowski (1991); Sullivan (1996); (1991); (1990) "The Political Economy of Reform in Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 22, 3 (August): 317-34; the distinction between production and consumption orientated projects, draws on Judith Tandler (1982) "Rural Projects through Urban Eyes: an Interpretation of the World Bank's New-Style Rural Development Projects," World Bank Staff Working Papers, No. 532: iii.

<sup>44</sup> Sullivan (1996); (1991); (1990); Weinbaum (1986); not surprisingly, this orientation is evident with respect to the writings of former officials and diplomats; see Eilts (1988); Quandt (1990); Zimmerman (1993).

<sup>45</sup> Morsy (1986); for more journalistic examples, see Juan Cole (2006) "Cheney will Ask Mubarak for Egyptian Troops for Iraq - al-Zaman - Will Cairo counter Tehran?, Informed Comment (17 January), <http://www.juancole.com/2006/01/cheney-will-ask-mubarak-for-egyptian.html>, 13 July 2006; Ahdaf Soueif (2001) "Nile Blues," *The Guardian* (6 November), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/waronterror/story/0,,588474,00.html>, 13 July 2006; such critiques, albeit more subtle, have been made of the Manshiet Nasser and Helwan projects; see Roger Zetter & Mohamed E. Hamza (1998) "Egypt: the State, Foreign Aid and Community Participation in Urban Shelter Projects," *International Planning Studies*, 3, 2 (June): 185-205; (1997).



Moreover, the thesis has reasserted the need for nuance in understanding the US-Egyptian aid relationship. The various urban development cases make clear that it has not simply been one of top-down control. AID and the other donors attempted to invoke conditionalities and, in some cases, did not renew projects which failed to serve their reform goals. Yet AID also acknowledged that its ability to secure reform and build administrative competence, whether using carrots or sticks, was limited. Its officials understood, only too well, that the exigencies of the broader strategic and political relationship constrained their exercise of influence through aid projects.

With respect to those who benefited the most from US aid, the answer doubtless depends on the type under consideration. The projects considered here have been entirely civilian orientated; the substantial military side of the aid relationship is likely more problematic. But it is obviously wrong to assert, in general terms, that the aid relationship has purely been of benefit to US corporations. At the very least, the extensive subcontracting of projects to Egyptian firms meant that aid provision had a local element. Moreover, those urban-development projects which were implemented usually benefited some recipients. Aspects of the Helwan intervention may have left some informal-sector residents worse off, yet both that project and the Manshiet Nasser intervention benefited others. The GCWWP had very tangible benefits, directly for those Cairenes who received connections but more generally for the many more who were no longer exposed to sewage flooding.

#### 7.3.4 EGYPT *QUA* RENTIER STATE

A related issue is that this thesis has been implicitly located within the distributive-state paradigm which links exogenous income to a host of pathologies, including underdevelopment, autocracy and state-society disengagement. The notion of neglectful rule presented here, has its origins in an attempt to apply the rentier framework to contemporary Egyptian politics.

While the post-1952 predilection for edifice projects and the more general tendency to confuse spending with development hint at the rentier character of both Egyptian political economy and political culture, the distributive state model is not easy to apply. Not only are Egypt's economy and society too complicated for the classical rentier paradigm, the model itself is economically determinist: autocracy is understood as a consequence of political economy and state-society disengagement. By contrast, this thesis has taken exactly the opposite view. In Egypt, authoritarianism has shaped the relations of distribution and disengagement.

Nonetheless, external revenues compensate for the Egyptian state's infrastructural deficits, a perhaps less-considered aspect of the distributive-state paradigm.<sup>46</sup> Hence the most politically interesting aspect of the aid relationship is not with respect to its putative infringements on Cairo's sovereignty, but rather the ways in which projects are bound up in the reproduction of the post-1952 political order. As the thesis illustrates, a key purpose of the aid relationship, particularly for Washington, has been to sustain the Sadat and Mubarak governments materially and symbolically. The success or failure of particular projects, moreover, has largely depended on the extent to which they jeopardized the political logics according to which these governments survived.

### 7.3.5 THE INFORMAL: BEYOND AUTONOMY & PATHOLOGY

One of the ironies uncovered in this study of Cairo is that the Egyptian discourses of marginality and scholarly notions of popular agency are, in a number of respects, mirror images. Not only are their pathologizations and valorizations sometimes stereotypical, but they also imply a degree of bottom-up capacity which is seemingly at odds with the durability of post-Nasserist order. This thesis has suggested how these oppositions might be transcended, in favour of an explicitly political conception of informality, entailing the distinct analytical levels of state and regime.

Moreover, it is difficult to draw a line between the state and informality, as separate or autonomous entities (2.5.3). The bottom-up informality of Cairo is, to a substantial extent, a consequence of the necessary informality of authoritarian power relations. Claims that the Egyptian state has informalized Egyptian society undermine those that the informal sector is an expression of *sha'abi* agency, or 'autonomous' from the larger political dispensation. Hence it is problematic to see informal Cairo as presenting a systemic challenge to Egypt's rulers. Without downplaying the significance of the Islamist penetration or more localized resistance to demolition, such neighbourhoods are not necessarily "spheres of dissidence" writ large.<sup>47</sup> Although certainly suggesting the state's infrastructural weakness, they remain vulnerable to despotic power exercised through the security forces. Indeed, by virtue of their lack of recognition, the discretion to act against them—should they someday harbour a more sustained opposition—is retained. Moreover, they are likely to remain in need of infrastructure and urban services and hence are vulnerable to the dependencies upon which clientelist integration and control are predicated. All such factors, moreover, suggest that official Egyptian opposition to regularization was not incidental.

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<sup>46</sup> For an example of this aspect, see Barnett R. Rubin (1992) "Political Elites in Afghanistan: Rentier State Building, Rentier State Wrecking," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 24, 1 (February): 77-99; see also Glasser (2001): 99-101.

<sup>47</sup> Ismail (2000): 364.

Perhaps the most sustained attempt to argue for the autonomy of the informal is Bayat's view of everyday 'encroachment', in Cairo and elsewhere, as a bottom-up challenge to the state and social elites. Yet this claim is problematic in a number of respects. In order to sustain it, Bayat would need to show how particular communities or practices directly infringe on the prerogatives of the powerful. Any attempt, however, is likely to be frustrated by the spatial segregation increasingly characteristic of upscale Cairo and the tendency of the upper-elites to depart for desert villas. In practice, encroachment is more likely to affect Cairenes of a similar socio-economic status.<sup>48</sup> While it certainly contradicts the idea of accessible public space, so does the politics of neglect more generally. Bayat ignores the fact that state officials are often indifferent to the occupation of public land or the illegal conversion of farmland; they may even sometimes sanction it. They are similarly unconcerned about the upkeep of the public services, such as water and sewerage, which informal sector residents may sometimes pirate. They may even seek to profit from such piracy.<sup>49</sup> Yet again, bottom-up informality is less necessarily agential, and perhaps more a reflection of top-down informality.

Ironically this thesis about state-society disengagement seems to be concluding with an argument *against* the disengagement and autonomy of the informal. The apparent contradiction can be resolved, however, by recalling the distinction between the weak state and the strong post-1952 regime. While it might well be interesting to argue that infrastructural constraints have limited the use of despotic power by Egypt's rulers, the more demonstrable point here is of their inverse relationship. At the infrastructural level, state capacity has been constrained by Egypt's historical legacy of underdevelopment aggravated by the exigencies of authoritarianism. In the peripheral zones of Egyptian society and even Cairo, its writ is problematic and bottom-up indifference or resistance to its policies may in some cases be widespread. Yet the regime is highly durable, with successive governments making use of the same techniques—indirect rule, clientelism, risk avoidance—to demobilize Egyptian society. Such measures have pre-empted and contained any bottom-up challenges that informal Cairo might have posed to post-1952 rulers, but provide little foundation upon which these governments might govern their capital.

### 7.3.6 BEYOND ETHNOGRAPHY & DEVELOPMENT

Finally, this thesis has suggested a new approach to the study of Cairo and urban politics in Egypt. At the risk of overgeneralization, scholarship on Cairo has often fallen into one of two broad categories. Although anthropologists have recently begun to focus on more elite spaces, their studies have more usually been ethnographies of subaltern neighbourhoods. Whatever their strengths in illustrating the complexities and nuances of everyday life in Cairo, they have

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<sup>48</sup> For example, see Taher (1986): 63-85

<sup>49</sup> Fahmy (2003): 606.

tended not to engage directly with the workings of the state. When they do so, they sometimes use media reportage or depend largely on the impressionistic accounts of their informants.<sup>50</sup> Another problematic has been that while these works are often quite useful at presenting Cairo's *sha'abi* neighbourhoods as important sites of study with respect to such larger issues as the impact of globalization or the role of international organizations, they say relatively little about the areas as parts of the larger city.<sup>51</sup>

Studies 'from above', the other broad category, have been more scarce. As noted at the outset, there is little urban-politics literature dealing with Egypt. Perhaps coming the closest are Janet Abu-Lughod's magisterial, *Cairo: A 1001 Years of the City Victorious*—in part written with the assistance of the city's planners—and later works by such Egypt veterans as John Waterbury and Tim Sullivan.<sup>52</sup> But there has also emerged a substantial planning or development-studies literature. Consisting not merely of consultancy studies, it also includes the work of Egyptian research students looking at particular development projects, and sometimes reflecting on their experiences as state employees.<sup>53</sup> While it contains numerous neighbourhood case studies, these are often situated in a concern for the larger agglomeration.<sup>54</sup> Such scholarship is generally more technocratic than political in orientation, but its authors have had greater access to state agencies.

This thesis has sought to build on these available literatures—particularly the latter development and planning studies—to frame a third view 'from the middle'. The development-interventions literature has been used to discuss not only the interventions themselves, but also informal Cairo more generally. While not without its shortcomings, this approach has offered a more macro-level view than has been possible in the ethnographic literature studies. For example, while scholarship in this latter tradition focused on the theme of 'spatial war' between the state and informal Cairo, the view from the middle suggests the more limited nature of the phenomenon.

Perhaps most importantly, development projects and their associated literatures have served as a proxy for asking questions of urban and national politics in ways which would not have otherwise been possible. They provided a measure of access to ministries and agencies including GOPP, CWO, GOSD and the Cairo and Giza governorates. In some cases, they have illustrated the thinking of particular officials and politicians, offering insights into the clientelist character of everyday politics. Most crucially, they have offered a series of plausible explanations for the pathologies of urban management and planning, pervasive in contemporary Cairo,

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<sup>50</sup> Ghannam (2002); see also, Donald P. Cole (2002) "The People, the State, and the Global in Cairo," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 75, 4 (Fall): 793-800.

<sup>51</sup> Elyachar (2003); Ghannam (2002).

<sup>52</sup> Abu-Lughod (1971): 144-239; see also Sullivan (1983); Waterbury (1978).

<sup>53</sup> Daef (1994); Kardash (1993); Sakr (1990); Taher (1997a); (1997b); Zaghoul (1994).

<sup>54</sup> For an illustration of this point, compare Kardash (1993) with Ghannam (2002).

which are grounded in the exigencies of durable autocracy and not some simplistic notion of resource constraints.

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