CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Security Studies

Master's Thesis

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CHARLES UNIVERSITY

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Urbanism and Authoritarian Resilience: Preventing Popular Uprisings in Egypt

Master's Thesis

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Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

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2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on Alžběta Kvasničková

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References

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Abstract

This research aims to understand the interplay between authoritarian resilience and urban planning within Egypt, by following the nature of regime robustness through an analysis of the Egyptian Capital, Cairo, after the military coup of 2013. This thesis assumes that there are political and social implications to top-down urban planning and design choices and explores how the mechanisms of political repression-based strategy of regime stability manifest themselves in the urban layout of Cairo. Using a comparative single case study method, Cairo's recent urban planning is analyzed in a Foucauldian framework. The analysis is based on triangulating from primary Arabic sources, satellite imagery, maps and secondary literature. The results gathered are that many of the completed or currently being finished restructuring projects facilitate a rapid and easier containment of resistance forces by the armed forces if another big-scale mass uprising ever occurred again. Additionally, urban developments by the Egyptian government promote the narrative of state-sponsored prosperity, yet in reality they lead to relocation of citizens to easily monitored satellite cities in the periphery. Finally, the continuous development segregates different socioeconomic classes, politically marginalizing the urban poor.

Abstrakt

Cílem tohoto výzkumu je pochopit vzájemné působení mezi autoritářskou odolností a městským plánováním v Egyptě, a to prostřednictvím analýzy egyptského hlavního města Káhiry po vojenském převratu v roce 2013. Tato práce vychází z předpokladu, že urbanistické plánování a designové volby shora mají politické a sociální důsledky, a zkoumá, jak se mechanismy strategie stability režimu založené na politické represi projevují v urbanistickém uspořádání Káhiry. S využitím komparativní metody jedné případové studie je nedávné urbanistické plánování Káhiry analyzováno z foucaultovské perspektivy. Analýza je založena na triangulaci z primárních arabských zdrojů, satelitních snímků, map a sekundární literatury. Získané výsledky ukazují, že mnohé z dokončených nebo právě dokončovaných restrukturalizačních projektů usnadňují rychlé a snadnější zadržení sil odporu ozbrojenými silami, pokud by někdy došlo k dalšímu masovému povstání velkého rozsahu. Kromě toho městská výstavba egyptské vlády podporuje narativ státem podporované prosperity, ve skutečnosti však vede k přesunu občanů do snadno sledovatelných satelitních měst na periferii. V neposlední řadě neustálý rozvoj segreguje

různé socioekonomické třídy a politicky marginalizuje lidi žijící ve „slumech“.

Keywords

Urban Planning, Authoritarian Resilience, Foucault, Cairo, Arab Spring

Klíčová slova

Urbanismus, autoritářská resilience, Foucault, Káhira, Arabské jaro

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Název práce

Urbanismus a autoritářská resilience: Prevence masových povstání v Egyptě

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Introduction

In my thesis, I aim to explore the intricate relationship between state power and urban planning. My focus will be on understanding the concept of authoritarian resilience and authoritarian adaptability and learning within the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa), with a special emphasis on how cities were reorganized spatially after the Arab Spring revolutions. In terms of the analysis's time frame, this thesis's research focuses on post-Arab Spring Egypt. After 2013, a resurgence of authoritarianism can be observed in Egypt, taking a nominal form of electoral democracy. The post-2013 regime is reintroducing harsh measures against political activism, including stricter legislation on civil protests, and strengthening the role of the army in the political governance of the country resulting, among other things, in the militarization of urban spaces in downtown Cairo.

Scholarly literature on Egypt's post-2013 political trajectory often examines the resurgence of authoritarianism through the lens of the state's changing internal security laws, the shifting loyalties of the political opposition, or the increasingly powerful security-military complex. There is also a growing strand exploring the societal and political consequences of state-continued liberal policies, describing the dubious combination of dynamics between globalized market forces and political repression, evolving into a state dubbed as neoliberal authoritarianism.[1]

In this thesis, I build on the existing scholarly body debating authoritarian resilience in Egypt, and more broadly on the whole region of the Middle East, yet I explore the nature of the regime robustness and state's control through spatial analysis of the Egyptian Capital, Cairo. It is already well established in the body of literature that urban planning has an imminent political and social dimension. On the crossroads between political sciences, architecture, and urban studies, there is an inherent link of urbanity to sovereign authority, and how the way the city is planned and organized tells us about the social practices of power that the modern state is the source of. "There is a politics of space because space is political", as put by Lefebvre in one of his seminal essays on social productions of space.[2] Thus, I conduct a study of the nature of the authoritarian regime and the political development in

[1] C. B. Tansel, 'Neoliberalism and the Antagonisms of Authoritarian Resilience in the Middle East', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 118, no. 2 (1 April 2019): 287–305.
[2] Stuart Elden, *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography* (London: Routledge, 2016), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315610146.

Egypt through the lens of Cairo, the ever-growing metropolis inhabiting over 22 million people.

Cairo was the site of the massive popular uprisings that took over much of the Arab Middle East in early 2011, dubbed the Arab Spring. Over 200,000 people occupied Tahrir Square for 18 days in protest against the long-standing autocratic rule of President Hosni Mubarak, with more people taking part in protests in the streets and other cities all over Egypt. The mass uprising culminated on the 11th of February when Mubarak resigned from his office, prompted by the hesitancy of the Egyptian military command to follow orders to deploy the army to quell protests.[3] Yet after almost 13 years, the promise of a democratic change for millions of Egyptians seems to be lost and what we observe in the political landscape is the resurgence of an authoritarian regime backed by a military elite and patrimonial economic structure, which is more resilient than before to any political changes.[4]

Due to the limited availability of primary sources on other countries, I have chosen to concentrate on Egypt's capital, Cairo. Specifically, my research will trace the top-down urban planning initiatives that unfolded in Cairo following the mass protests in the winter of 2011, or more precisely after the subsequent army-led coup d'état in 2013. I intend to investigate how the Egyptian government's approach to urban planning and the overall design of the capital have evolved since the 2011 Arab Spring.

By examining these aspects, I hope to demonstrate that urbanism has become a pivotal factor within Egyptian governance in reshaping power dynamics, ultimately reinforcing the regime's resilience against the democratization processes.

Research Questions and Logic of the Research

How do urban design, architectural form, and a set of regulations regarding the everyday experience of living in Cairo (what Foucault refers to as the *security dispositif*) contribute to the mechanisms of political repression of the current military regime in Egypt?

In order to answer the main question, I layered and developed its logic into the following sub-questions:

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[3] Neil Ketchley, '"The Army and the People Are One Hand!" Fraternization and the 25th January Egyptian Revolution', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56, no. 1 (2014): 155–86.
[4] John Chalcraft, 'Egypt's 2011 Uprising, Subaltern Cultural Politics, and Revolutionary Weakness', *Social Movement Studies* 20, no. 6 (2 November 2021): 669–85, https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2020.1837101.

How has urban planning and grand design of the Greater Cairo and New Town Cairo changed since the ascent of the military regime in 2013, marking the return of Mubarak's era of authoritarian governance? What are the logic, methods, and intents of the disciplinary governance embedded in the new urban design projects launched since the failure of the Arab Spring in Egypt?

The fundamental working assumption behind these questions is that the space matters and there are political and social implications to top-down urban planning and design choices. Especially in capital cities, the public space is not just a physical environment where people live and work, but also a critical arena where power is exercised, and social order is maintained.[5] The Egyptian Capital Cairo reflects the regime's governing rationalities towards its citizenry. The military-political apparatus that has governed Egypt since the 2013 coup under the presidency of Abdel Fattah El-Sisi managed to strengthen the authoritarian grip over the country. The country ranks lower each year in global rankings of political freedom in terms of political rights, civil liberties, functioning of government, and fair electoral process.[6] It is paramount for the autocratic government to maintain social stability and exert containment of any political resistance that could potentially grow into yet another mass-scale uprising as we witnessed in 2011. If the goal in Egypt is to prevent a repeat of the scenario of the overthrow of the dictator and the regime's top brass, how does this strategy manifest itself in the public space, the urban layout of Cairo, and the appearance and location of key government buildings?

The defined time frame of my thesis is the period of El-Sisi's rule; thus the text does not primarily focus on the revolutionary events of 2011 during the Arab Spring. However, the whole thesis is logically entangled with them, as the uprising makes up the starting point of the research questioning. Simultaneously, in my analysis, I often go further back in time to the Mubarak era to highlight the shift in government logic in top-down urban management.

Structure

The thesis is structured into three main parts as follows. The first part deals with a historical

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[5] Maryja Šupa, 'Socialinės Kontrolės Žemėlapiai: Miesto Erdvės Analizė Pagal M. Foucault', *Kriminologijos Studijos* 3 (16 December 2015): 82, https://doi.org/10.15388/CrimLithuan.2015.0.8951.

[6] 'Egypt: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report', Freedom House, accessed 31 June 2024, https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-world/2022.

and conceptual literature review. I seek to firstly briefly introduce the political situation in Egypt since the outbreak of the Arab Spring before I move on to examining the scholarly literature dealing with the concept of authoritarian resilience. I then provide an overview of relevant theories and previous research on the specificities of urban planning under an authoritarian regime.

The second part addresses the internal logic of research and deals with the theoretical framework and methods I employed throughout the thesis. The chapter elaborates on the Foucauldian framework for studying urban spaces and the concepts of sovereignty, disciplinarity, and biopolitics, and their application to urban planning in Cairo. The methodology section describes the chosen method (comparative single case study), including case study selection, data collection, and data analysis techniques.

The third part is the empirical analysis, which examines specific urban projects in the Historical and Greater Cairo and the construction of the Egyptian New Administrative Capital. This is followed by a discussion where I try to interpret the findings discussed in the analytical part through concepts presented in the theoretical framework.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Egypt and the Failed Promise of the Arab Spring

More than two weeks of mass-scale protests, occupation of Tahrir Square, and violent clashes with police forces, eventually led President Hussein Mubarak to step down on 11. February. Filling the political vacuum created by the collapse of Hosni Mubarak's 30-year rule, the SCAF (Supreme Council of Armed Forces) assumed a leading political role until the elections took place.[7] Yet, after the initial success of the revolution on the 25th of January 2011, the hopes for democratization in Egypt gradually vanished. Given its unique position, the army became a trusted entity during the unstable period of the cautious democratization process. Thanks to the contested allegiance of the Egyptian military forces during the January 25th revolution, and the initial Army's stabilizing role in the political handover, for a short time it was perceived as a neutral arbiter standing on the side of the public against a corrupt repressive regime. In January 2011, people were chanting " “The people and the army are one hand!”, which was on the anniversary of the revolution only a year after modified into “The army and the police are one dirty hand!”[8]. The nation became polarized about the influence of the Islamists over politics, and the Egyptian army intervened again when it overthrew the democratically elected President Mohammed Morsi on the 3rd of July 2013 and installed a new government headed by the former Field Marshal Abdel Fattah El-Sisi.[9] The new military regime embraced and reinforced authoritarianism through renewed repression of Islamists and political dissent, while at the same time enacting a set of legislative and military decrees making it more difficult to legally hold protest happenings in Cairo.[10] Hopes for political liberalization in the country were then severely stifled in 2013 by the regime's crackdown on protests against the ouster of democratically elected President Morsi. At the time, Egyptian armed forces used lethal force against Morsi supporters demonstrating in Rabaa al-Adawiyya Square, with estimates of up to 800 protesters killed.

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[7] Asef Bayat, ‘Global Tahrir’, in *Global Middle East*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 2021), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1h9dk55.24, 434.
[8] Ketchley, “‘The Army and the People Are One Hand!” Fraternization and the 25th January Egyptian Revolution’.
[9] Marc Lynch, ed., *The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 14.
[10] Laura Monfleur, “Challenging Urban Militarization in Post-2011 Downtown Cairo” in *Cairo Securitized: Reconceiving Urban Justice and Social Resilience* (Cairo, EGYPT: American University in Cairo Press, 2024), ed. Paul Amar, Deen Sharp, and Noura Wahby, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cuni/detail.action?docID=7384808.

This has effectively reopened the period of imprisonment of Muslim Brotherhood members and the harsh political repression of political Islamism in the country.[11]

At the beginning of 2024, El-Sisi was sworn in for his third presidential term after winning the election with almost 87 % of the vote, the political opposition being jailed or sidelined.[12] He is set out to rule the country till the year 2030, as long as he does not put in motion yet another bill to amend the constitution to prolong his tenure.[13]

1.2. Explaining the Democracy Deficit

Scholars writing on Middle East politics and security have paid close attention to what they considered an unprecedented durability of the authoritarianism that seemed to perpetrate the region. The research center and policy institute Freedom House regularly publishes a democracy index, assigning a democracy score and civil liberties for every country in the world. Prior to the largely unanticipated events of the Arab Spring, the body of research mostly revolved around attempts to establish explanatory causal links between specific local conditions and political arrangements in an effort to understand and explain the flagrant "democracy deficit".[14] As of the year 2010, there were 116 electoral democracies in the world according to its index; however, no Arab country was to be found among them.[15] Since the 1970s, the so-called third wave of democratization has been spreading globally, but it seems to have passed by the Middle East region (specifically the Arab countries).[16] The understanding of the authoritarian regimes of the MENA region was mainly built around two dominant scholarly traditions, transitology and the so-called post-democratization paradigm.[17] Both strands were invested in providing a causal explanation of why

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[11] Rania Magdi Fawzy, 'A Tale of Two Squares: Spatial Iconization of the Al Tahrir and Rabaa Protests', *Visual Communication (London, England)* 20, no. 1 (2021): 59–80, https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357218803395.
[12] 'Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi Sworn in for Third Term', France 24, 2 April 2024, https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20240402-egyptian-president-sisi-sworn-in-for-third-term.
[13] 'Egypt Constitutional Changes Could Mean Sisi Rule until 2030', accessed 20 July 2024, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-47947035.
[14] Khalid Mustafa Medani, 'Teaching the "New Middle East": Beyond Authoritarianism', *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46, no. 2 (April 2013): 222–24, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096513000176.
[15] 'Publication Archives', Freedom House, 20 April 2022, https://freedomhouse.org/reports/publication-archives.
[16] Huntington Samuel P, 'The Third Wave: [Economic Development, Expansion of the Middle Class, Elite Compromises, and Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century]', in *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization* (Routledge, 1997).
[17] Morten Valbjørn and André Bank, 'Examining the "Post" in Post-Democratization: The Future of Middle Eastern Political Rule through Lenses of the Past', *Middle East Critique* 19 (1 September 2010): 183–200, https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2010.514469.

authoritarianism perseveres in the region.

The following section aims to outline some of the arguments and research subfields that have become part of the debate on the nature and durability of authoritarianism in the Arab world. In turn, I will briefly introduce the debate as it has evolved before and after the mass protests of the Arab Spring, focusing in particular on the transformation in the overall conceptual and theoretical framing of analytical research.

1.3. Authoritarian Resilience in the Arab World

Larry Diamon, in his frequently highlighted article "Why Are There No Arab Democracies?" reflects on the nature of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. The article was published less than a year before the massive wave of anti-government protests and popular uprisings that swept across much of the Arab countries in the Middle East region at the turn of 2011, dubbed the Arab Spring. The author builds on previous studies on the "third wave of democratization" and statistics on the prevailing democratic deficit in the Arab world. Diamon considers the factors most often cited as having a causal link to the persistence of autocratic systems in Arab states; culture and religion, social and economic factors, authoritarian statecraft, and geopolitics. In the first point, the author relies on data from questionnaire surveys and statistics measuring the degree of political freedom to examine a hypothesized relationship between religion and authoritarian rule. Globally, statistically, there is no reason why democracy should not exist in the predominantly Muslim world, compared to other Muslim-majority countries that enjoy some levels of political freedom and electoral rule. Moreover, statistics from 2003 conducted by the World Values Survey indicated that the vast majority (up to 80% on average) of the population would support a democratic system in their country.[18] These figures speak directly against the reputed "aversion to democracy", which was claimed to be to some extent conditioned by the political culture and cultural make-up of the Arab world.[19] Overall, the appeal to culture as a single explanatory variable and a driving force in the political landscape in the Middle East has been criticized by many scholars to be empirically invalid and overly deterministic.[20] As

[18] Larry Diamond, 'Why Are There No Arab Democracies?', *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 1 (2010): 93–104.
[19] Elie Kedourie, *Democracy and Arab Political Culture* (London: Routledge, 2013), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315037257.
[20] Ibrahim Elbadawi and Samir A. Makdisi, *Democracy in the Arab World: Explaining the Deficit*, 1st ed., Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics 27 (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, [England] ;

El-Affendi puts it “the despotic order in the Arab world is not a reflection of the region’s cultural preferences”. It is however the capacity and ability of the regimes to defer the civilian preferences.[21] However, Diamon points to the gulf of opinion between secularists and people who believe that religious figures and institutions should have a role in future democratic rule. This leads to the real possibility that the secular liberal opposition and the electorate may lean towards a persistent authoritarian regime rather than risk handing over power to a democratically elected Islamist movement. The author even compares this fear of Islamism among the elites to the fear of the radical left and communism, which crippled the negotiation of the democratic transition in Latin America during the second half of the 20th century. [22]

Diamon also draws only briefly on the notorious "resource curse" debate in the rentier states of the Middle East, which is concerned not with development but with the structure of the economy. The term rentier state was first introduced by economist Mahdavy in 1970 in the context of economies in the Middle East and Africa region. At the time, Mahdavy offered a comprehensive description of the state-building process in MENA countries dependent on rentier economies.[23] Beblawi and Luciani followed up on his work and set out to describe the systematic processes in oil-rich states, mostly in the Gulf, that lead to low levels of political participation and weak democracy. Beblawi's work laid the groundwork for explaining the causal link between dependence on the receipt of external rents and undemocratic forms of governance. The logic behind the relationship between resource wealth and the democratic deficit in a rentier state can be explained in simplified terms as follows: The government is able to derive a substantial portion of its revenue without relying on taxation of the domestic economic activity. The state’s financial independence deforms the foundations of any social contract enforcing political accountability toward citizens, a state aptly summarised in “no-taxation, no-representation”. [24] With reduced pressure from citizens and civil society, there is little incentive for the government to foster political

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Routledge, 2011), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203852866.

[21] Abdelwahab El-Affendi, “Political culture and the crisis of democracy in the Arab world.” 2011. In Democracy in the Arab World, 31-60. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203852866-10.

[22] Diamond, ‘Why Are There No Arab Democracies?’

[23] Hossein Mahdavy, ‘Patterns and Problems of Economic Development in Rentier States: (Harvard), in *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East* (Routledge, 1970).

[24] Thomas Richer, ‘Oil and the Rentier State in the Middle East | 16 | The Routledge Hand’, accessed 2 July 2024, https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429342486-16/oil-rentier-state-middle-east-thomas-richter.

participation or democratic institutions. This often leads to the consolidation of power within a small ruling elite or autocratic governance structures. Islam Qasem later redefined the concept of rentier state with respect to the structure of state revenue. He included in the category of rentier states those states which, although otherwise poor in oil and mineral resources, receive rent as income independently of the economic activity of the population. These include, for example, Egypt, which collects rents from transit fees in the Suez Canal and receives substantial foreign aid annually alongside with Jordan.[25]

Even when debating the Egypt revolutionary days in 2011, one cannot possibly separate the political and economic sides of the matter, and while the lack of meaningful political participation and freedom of expression undoubtedly concerned activists and vocal civic leaders, it was rather the deteriorating economic situation and prospects that politicized and mobilized the masses of urban society. [26] Just as in neighboring Tunisia, economic grievances were a significant driving force that pushed hundreds of thousands of people to take it into the streets. Overall frustration with uneven economic development and decades of austerity, neoliberal economic policies combined with widespread corruption and cronyism were highlighted as the main triggers behind the protests.[27]

1.4. After the Arab Spring

The large-scale popular uprising in 2011 meant an impetus for a conceptual reconsideration of the supposed regional exceptionality and its "peculiarity" in the socio-political arrangement.[28] Scholars turned to new concepts and phenomena through which to grasp and examine socio-economic and political trends in the Middle East. Since late 2010, a wave of political protests and mass uprisings has spread rapidly from Tunisia to Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and other countries. The scale and intensity of the protests were unprecedented and unprecedented in an atmosphere of long-lasting robust authoritarian apparatuses. Indeed, protests in four countries, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, led to the removal of dictators from office. Several factors have played a role in why the popular

[25] Islam Yasin Qasem, *Oil and Security Policies: Saudi Arabia, 1950-2012* (BRILL, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004277731.
[26] Marc Lynch, ed., *The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 10.
[27] Tansel, 'Neoliberalism and the Antagonisms of Authoritarian Resilience in the Middle East'.
[28] Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2013), https://doi.org/10.1515/9780804786331, 3.

uprisings lost momentum after the initial phase of seeming success at the beginning of 2011. In explaining the failure of the Arab awakening, the emphasis is on the willingness of regimes to use military force against their citizens. As for the position of the ruling class, the loyalty of the military to the regime was crucial to the political outcome of the protests.[29] Indeed, the general academic consensus in assessing the events of the Arab Spring is that the degree of independence of the military from the political leadership proved to be a key factor in whether or not the regime collapsed.[30] In other words, the extent to which the military leadership of the armed forces was convinced that it would survive beyond the current regime played a crucial role in the resilience of the regime facing massive uprisings. Eva Bellin argues that the strength of an authoritarian regime ultimately depended on whether the military was organized along patrimonial or relatively professionalized, institutionalized lines. If I make a quick detour back to Egypt, without the support of the military, the regime would collapse, as we saw in the fall of the Mubarak government.[31] Philippe Droz-Vincent attributes to the Egyptian Army a somewhat high level of institutionalization, meaning that the apparatus is strongly hierarchical, and career advancement usually takes place on the base of personal merit and not sectarian, ethnic, or political affiliation. This also means that the army is not too closely attached to the regime and forms a distinct entity within the state.[32] Egypt before 2011 was an authoritarian state that depended on a coercive apparatus for its survival, so when the army refused to suppress the protests, Mubarak was left with essentially no choice but to leave.

1.4.1. Authoritarian Learning

Stephen King argues that it was not only the scholarly tradition that was revisited, but also the authoritarian regimes polished and refined their strategies of governance and social control.[33] Apart from the important variable of the structure of the military-political apparatus, which decided the initial success of the uprisings, there could be also observed a certain kind of "adaptive capacity" in the authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. Steven

[29] Eva Bellin, 'Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring', *Comparative Politics* 44, no. 2 (2012): 127–49.
[30] David Patel et.al., 'Diffusion and Demonstration' in *The Arab Uprisings Explained*.
[31] Bellin, 'Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East'.
[32] Philippe Droz-Vincent, *Military Politics of the Contemporary Arab World* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[33] Stephen Stephen J. King, 'Authoritarian Adaptability and the Arab Spring', in *The Routledge Handbook to the Middle East and North African State and States System* (Routledge, 2019), 75.

Heydemann and Reinoud Leenders defined this new idiosyncratic theoretical concept as authoritarian "upgrading" or learning.[34] They build on the strategies the restored regimes in Arab countries adopted after the Arab Spring and highlight basic elements of containing the civil societies. Heydemann and Leenders point out that the transitology literature oftentimes pays attention to processes of societal activation, mobilization, and "democratic contagion" within the region. Instead, the authors look at the opposite side of the coin and asses the "authoritarian contagion" i.e. how the authoritarian strategies and practices diffuse as a reaction to popular resistance.[35] The article also refers to a Wall Street Journal interview with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, where he was hinting at this process of learning: 'You have to upgrade yourself with the upgrading of the society… We have to keep up with this change [in society], as state and institutions.'[36] In simple terms, the authors highlight the fact, that the political leadership of the Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes is constantly updating on the strategies and lessons learned within the broader regional experience.

1.4.2. Authoritarian-Neoliberal Intersection

In recent years, several case studies have documented manifestations of authoritarian urbanism and have highlighted the role of urbanism in authoritarian state-building. Safa Ashoub together with Mohammed Elkhatib concentrate specifically on Cairo after the event of Arab Spring. In their article *"Enclaving the City; New Models of Containing the Urban Population"*, they trace the most disruptive changes in Cairo's urban design infrastructure. Building on the theory of authoritarian urbanism, the article illustrates in much detail how the selected municipality or transport-related projects separate and control the population.[37]

In his book Globalized Authoritarianism, Koenraad Bogaert analyses urban spaces within a Foucauldian notion of governmentality. He focuses primarily on neoliberal urban planning policies and the transformation of urban life in authoritarian states in the Middle East and Africa region, with urban politics in Morocco as his case study. He seeks to refute the

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[34] Steven Heydemann and Reinoud Leenders, 'Authoritarian Learning and Authoritarian Resilience: Regime Responses to the "Arab Awakening"', *Globalizations* 8, no. 5 (October 2011): 647–53, https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2011.621274.
[35] Heydemann and Leenders, 649.
[36] Heydemann and Leenders, 651, edit of the quote from the authors.
[37] Safa H. Ashoub and Mohamed W. Elkhateeb, 'Enclaving the City; New Models of Containing the Urban Populations: A Case Study of Cairo', *Urban Planning* 6, no. 2 (25 May 2021): 202–17, https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v6i2.3880.

"simplistic correlation between democratic transition and market liberalization" and discusses the implications of global neoliberal policies for urban development projects related to informal settlements and the revitalization of public spaces.[38] He argues that such projects in fact help create new forms of authoritarianism by helping to control the population by creating class distinctions.[39]

On a similar note, W.J. Dorman, a political scientist focusing on Cairo's urban development since the emergence of the independent Egyptian Republic, writes on the unique influence of the Egyptian military and security top brass on urban planning policies, as well as the functional fusion of the state and the military when it comes to the land ownership and real-estate development. He concludes from his previous research that "the elite has gradually established a monopoly on formal-sector urbanism since the 1950s".[40] In his article on *The Praetorian Politics of Land Management in Cairo*, Dorman concentrates on the gradual separation of the regime from informal neighborhoods, where control over poor urban mass has grown more difficult.[41] He has adopted a method of process tracing to explore the causal relationship between the neoliberal structural policies starting in Egypt in the 70s and Cairo's fragmented nondemocratic urban layout and ultimately argues, that the Cairo urban trajectory should rather be attributed to the long-lasting authoritarian political order, presenting concrete policies and initiatives taking place in the Cairo Governorate since the Mubarak era until 2013.

Dorman points out that the top-down process of planning new satellite cities and developing megaprojects in the deserts on the periphery since the 1970s has less to do with providing viable solutions for the problem of overpopulated Downtown Cairo, and more to do with the disengagement of the elites from Egyptian society. The "gatekeeping" of certain spaces while largely neglecting the development of informal areas serves the political-military elites as a sort of risk-management that lies in containing the threat of informality.[42] Later in the analytical part of the thesis, I build on his insights into the management of Cairo's urbanity

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[38] Koenraad Bogaert, *Globalized Authoritarianism: Megaprojects, Slums, and Class Relations in Urban Morocco*, Globalization and Community, vol. 27 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 34.
[39] Bogaert.
[40] W.j. Dorman, 'Exclusion and Informality: The Praetorian Politics of Land Management in Cairo, Egypt', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 5 (2013): 1584–1610, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2012.01202.x, 1602.
[41] Dorman.
[42] Dorman, 1604.

in the Mubarak era and further develop the argument about the aggrandizement of elites in the case of the construction of Egypt's New Administrative Capital east of Cairo.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

To analyse the relationship between urban development and the regime's political grip over Cairo post-Arab Spring, this thesis employs a Foucauldian framework, focusing on the concepts of sovereignty, disciplinarity, and biopolitics as first articulated in Michel Foucault's lectures on power relations and later developed by others who used his spatial perspectives in regard to urban planning and examination of the invisible workings of power in public spaces.[43] The "Foucauldian framework" is also no rigid, methodologically neat analytical manual for the researcher to employ, but rather an analytical-interpretive guide for examining the material manifestation of power relations.[44] When analysing modern urbanism, Foucault offered a set of insights into the political and social implications of how the space in modern states is produced, organized, and hierarchized and how in turn, the urbanity and workings of spatiality influence the political.[45] Adopting the framework will help me elucidate how the Egyptian regime's urban planning strategies serve to reinforce its resilience and control over the social body in the urban agglomerations.

2.1. Power Modalities and Power Structure in Urban Spaces

The Foucauldian perspective for the analysis of urban spaces is based on Foucault's series of lectures on power relations at the College de France between 1975 and 1978.[46] In these lectures, he sought to capture the transformation of what it means to exercise power as a central ruler, following the changes in power practices from feudal order to its form in contemporary modern states. Foucault went on to capture and describe the structure and modalities of power, taking as one of its main themes the effort to present an analytical framework to critically view the production of knowledge and spaces.[47]

Foucault described the transformations regarding urban planning of cities in eighteenth and

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[43] Elden, *Space, Knowledge and Power*.
[44] Which also made my work on this thesis somewhat strenuous.
[45] John Pløger, 'Foucault's Dispositif and the City', *Planning Theory* 7, no. 1 (1 March 2008): 51–70, https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095207085665.
[46] Michel Foucault, *Bezpečnost, teritorium, populace: přednášky na Collège de France (1977-1978)*, První české vydání, Dějiny politické filozofie (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2023).
[47] Šupa, 'Socialinės Kontrolės Žemėlapiai'.

nineteenth-century France, Sweden, and other countries in Europe, which occurred as the states became increasingly interested in securing trade and the circulation of goods and populations, maintaining public health, and setting standards of sanitation and hygiene. Through a historical analysis of the changing nature of state power, he traced the emergence of governmental rationalities and the concomitant transformation of the security apparatus. Or rather, the extension of a form of power into spheres in which the pre-modern ruler did not intervene or have the means to do so. In contrast, with the advent of modernity and changes in political and economic structures, our society began to be organized differently, and so power relations between the population (or the individual subjects) and the government as a sovereign entity were rearranged.[48]

By putting spatiality at the center of his analysis, Foucault demonstrated that power is not just a matter of direct control or force but is also about the organization of space and the strategic placement of bodies within that space. Pløger summarizes Foucault's reflections on the impacts of the disciplinarian forces on urbanity as follows: "The city should be ruled, governed, and disciplined through the division and graduation of space, the zoning and diagrammatization of space. Urbanism was seen as a tool to shape order, prevent epidemics and revolution, and produce morally virtuous families. This way urbanism became more closely tied to the political way of thinking about government and governing citizens through space."[49]

Foucault proposed that there are three modalities of power in contemporary society: *sovereignty, disciplinarity,* and *biopolitics*, which are intertwined and coexist in the modern state.[50] In the following section, I elaborate on each further and simultaneously indicate how I intend to work with this theoretical basis on power apparatus in the analytical part.

2.1.1. Modalities of power

Sovereignty, in Foucauldian terms, refers to the traditional power exerted by the state through legal and coercive measures. It encompasses the ability of the state to impose laws, exercise control over territory, and enforce order through authoritative means. In the feudal medieval order, it was the concept of sovereignty that played a predominant role in the way

[48] Michel Foucault, *Bezpečnost, teritorium, populace*, 12-40.
[49] Pløger, 'Foucault's Dispositif and the City'.
[50] Šupa, 'Mapping Practices of Social Control'.

authority and governance were exercised in a particular territory.[51] In the context of urban planning in Cairo, sovereignty manifests in the government's top-down decision-making process regarding urban projects. This includes the creation of the New Administrative Capital, large-scale infrastructure projects, or the State's stepping into the informal neighborhoods, revitalizing and integrating them into the envisioned city shape. These projects often reflect the regime's priorities and are implemented without significant public consultation, demonstrating the state's unilateral control over urban space.

Disciplinarity, on the other hand, refers to the mechanisms through which power is exercised by regulating behavior and organizing spaces to create docile bodies.[52] "Disciplinary power is concerned with political order: working on enclosures, partitioning, coding spaces as functional sites, ranking, and creating hierarchical arrangements of space".[53] This modality of power operates through surveillance, normalization, and spatial organization, influencing how individuals conduct themselves within the urban environment. Later on, Foucault continued in his conceptualization of disciplinary power in his work *Discipline and Punish*, developing the theoretical framework on societal mechanisms ensuring the individual internalized discipline and the role of space, which generates these effects of power.[54] There he examined the practical constitution of disciplinary forces and how it materializes in modern societies, putting forward the famous argument of *panopticism* while debating the institution of a modern prison.[55]

Regarding urban planning, any urban design and structures that were installed to shape how residents interact with and move through the city can be seen as a tool of disciplinary power. This for me would in Cairo include e.g. strategic placement of surveillance systems, a design of public spaces to minimize large gatherings, and the creation of controlled environments that promote certain behaviors while discouraging others.

Lastly, biopolitics, or biopower is a theoretical concept that broadens the theorization of state power and state control over its citizens, as it looks at existing regulations and governance of life processes that happen at the level of the population. Biopolitics, according to Foucault,

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[51] Šupa, 83.
[52] Foucault, *'Bezpečnost, Teritorium, Populace'*.
[53] Nassar, 'Spaces of Power', 20.
[54] Aya Nassar, 'Spaces of Power: Politics, Subjectivity and Materiality in Post-Independence Cairo' (phd, University of Warwick, 2018), http://webcat.warwick.ac.uk/record=b3431690~S15, 20.
[55] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, 1979), accessed online, 167.

involves the regulation of populations through various means, focusing on the administration of life and the optimization of the health, productivity, and well-being of the population. [56] "While the pre-modern sovereign based his rule on the right to *let live* or *force to die*, the modern state reversed it into the imperative to either *force to live* or *let die*. Life became the main objective of power, while death became undesirable because it is the ultimate end of the reach of power."[57]

This modality of power operates at a broader societal level, influencing policies related to health, hygiene, and, of course, the design of urban spaces and traffic routes in the city. The theoretical set behind the concept of biopolitics offers a way of looking at the measures concerning public health and safety as a distinct way of managing and controlling the movement and behavior of the millions of people moving daily through the city.[58]At the same time, the data generated from measuring the population statistics provides a new dimension to power. Seen from the Foucauldian perspective, the newly acquired knowledge of population statistics is not neutral, as it also became a powerful tool for effective governance and regulation, enabling more precise and impactful interventions in (not only) urban spaces.[59]

Biopolitical strategies employed by the Caro governorate would aim to manage and optimize the population's living conditions, while also seeking to establish processes to optimize the measurement of population parameters. Manifestation of biopolitical power in Cairo's urban planning would include governmental initiatives to improve infrastructure, housing, and public services, which are primarily put for public benefit but also serve to strengthen the regime's control by ensuring a dependent and compliant citizenry.

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[56] Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* (New York: University Press, 2011), 33.
[57] Foucault, 1976 quoted in Šupa, 'Mapping Practices of Social Control', 88. Text highlighted in the original.
[58] Lemke, *Biopolitics*.
[59] Michael Dillon and Luis Lobo-Guerrero, 'Biopolitics of Security in the 21st Century: An Introduction', *Review of International Studies* 34, no. 2 (April 2008): 265–92, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508008024, 279.

3. Methodology

3.1. Primary Data Type

In my effort to gather substantial information to be able to address my research goals, I rely on various data sources and data triangulation. The research attempting to trace on-the-ground changes in the constantly transforming metropolis faces several methodological obstacles.

Firstly, there is the issue of facing state propaganda or just inaccurate information stated in documents, that have grown outdated. I list the official governmental documents and various reports issued by relevant Egyptian authorities as one of my primary sources. Throughout the thesis, I used the extracted information as a stepping stone for understanding the government's narrative around Cairo's urban transformation. However, as the point of this thesis is to highlight the unadmitted government rationalities leading to the crippling of public spaces and containment of the masses, I was extremely careful when processing any information provided in these documents for further analysis.

Secondly, Cairo is a city that continuously evolves even in the absence of direct top-down interventions, so I had to segment a limited number of aspects of urban renovation on which I wanted concentrate in my argumentation.

Lastly, I didn't have the luxury of spending time in Cairo at the time of writing, so I had to rely on satellite images, city diagrams and plans, and my brief visit to the city a few years ago for a rudimentary understanding of the city's layout and atmosphere.

For data triangulation, I used secondary literature, photos, and videos from the architectural forum "SkyscraperCity", videos of the city uploaded on YouTube, satellite images from Google Earth, Google Maps Street View, and an interview with an assistant professor at the Department of Public Policy and Administration at The American University in Cairo. I also worked with Mapping.properties, a website mapping vacant land and real estate properties in Egypt.

3.2.Space Matters – Methodological Inspiration

In a very similar viewpoint, Diren Taş explores the urban transformation in the Turkish city of Sur, mostly inhabited by Kurds. He lists several urbanistic projects that he argues serve as anti-insurgency tools as they allow the state apparatus to reconfigure the local

communities and control them. Albeit from a different region, the chapter traces similar processes of how the state suppresses possible mass protests by controlling the socio-spatial sphere.[60] Written from a rather normative approach to urban design is an article by Dalia Taha, Department of Architectural Engineering at the October 6 University in Cairo. Her short article is invested in providing a set of design guidelines that would help preserve democracy through a transformation of the urban spaces in Cairo in the post-revolution era. The study includes concrete proposals for democratic re-production of Cairo's urban spaces and thus is relevant for comparison purposes. [61]

[60] Diren Taş, 'Displacing Resistance in Kurdish Regions: The Symbiosis of Neoliberal Urban Transformation and Authoritarian State in Sur', in *Authoritarian Neoliberalism and Resistance in Turkey: Construction, Consolidation, and Contestation*, ed. İmren Borsuk et al. (Singapore: Springer, 2022), 81–104, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-4213-5_4.
[61] Dalia A. Taha, 'Political Role of Urban Space Reflections on the Current and Future Scene in Cairo-Egypt', *Architecture Research* 6, no. 2 (2016): 38–44.

4. Analysis

4.1. Cairo. A City for 22 Million People?

"Cairo is a city of endless traffic and noise"

About 95 % of Egypt's population, which amounts to over 112 million people, is concentrated along the banks of the river Nile in the Nile Delta extending north of Cairo.[62] Covering 3,085 kilometers, Cairo is by far the largest and most densely populated city in the country and has experienced dynamic urban development over the past decade. Cairo has grown continuously since virtually the beginning of the 20th century, but in recent decades the rate of growth has increased beyond what the city can accommodate in its current state. Since 1950, the population has increased from just over 2.5 million to an estimated more than 22 million people today, meaning nearly half of the urban population in Egypt lives in Cairo.[63]

4.2. Reshaping the City

4.2.1. Tahrir Square and Ismailia

In an attempt to trace the major changes in the urban character of Cairo, the analysis should begin at Tahrir Square, the epicenter of the revolutionary events of early 2011 that ousted Hosni Mubarak. From Tahrir I will then move to Rabaa Al-Adawiya Square, where in August 2013 the Egyptian army used lethal forces to suppress pro-Morsi demonstration, killing hundreds of protesters.[64] The events in Tahrir were closely followed in the foreign media throughout the occupation in January 2011, and spontaneous demonstrations modelled on the Tahrir occupation emerged around the world in support of the uprising and after the became the emblem of the global Occupy Movements. Tahrir did indeed become global for a short period of time, and to this day the space remains loaded with political symbolism.[65] Given the Square centrality in Cairo and its proximity to several governmental buildings, the occupation of the space translated into a direct confrontation between people

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[62] 'World Bank Open Data', World Bank Open Data, accessed 6 May 2023, https://data.worldbank.org.
[63] 'Cairo, Egypt Population (2024) - Population Stat', accessed 1 July 2024, https://populationstat.com/egypt/cairo.
[64] 'Egypt Rabaa Killings Pain Lingers 10 Years On', *BBC News*, 13 August 2023, sec. Middle East, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-66432877.
[65] Asef Bayat, 'Global Tahrir', 171.

and the physical symbols of the state power.[66]

Tahrir Square is a generous open space with many entrances, covering an area of about 46,000 square meters.[67] The square got its name after the Egyptian Revolution of Free Officers in 1952, which overthrew the monarchy politically dependent on Great Britain. In terms of the architectural layout of the square and the surrounding area, Tahrir acquired its current form during the reign of Khedive Ismail from 1863 to 1879, who is generally considered to be the founder of modern Cairo. Ismail, who grew up in Paris, was inspired by Haussmann's renovation of Paris during the reign of Napoleon III, which rid the city of its winding medieval streets and replaced them with wide boulevards and straight avenues. Haussmann's complete redevelopment remains to this day a model example of pragmatic urban planning. At a time of political struggle and contentious economic change, the rehabilitation of the Parisian urban layout achieved better state control over the streets, ensured security and the ability of the regime to crush resistance, while as a secondary benefit, it also provided improved traffic circulation and raised the standard of urban sanitation.[68] Enlisting the help of chief Paris landscape designers, Ismail redesigned parts of historical Cairo in Haussmann's fashion. The renovated district including the later renamed Tahrir Square, took the name "Ismailia", carrying the Khedive's legacy.[69]

With this brief historical excursion, I hoped to outline the nature and logic behind the open public space that makes up Tahrir Square. Wide boulevards and generous squares are a step in the planning logic to avoid urban barricade warfare, but large public spaces also secondhandedly provide a platform for mass uprisings. As Asaf Bayat argues, the public spaces can also transform themselves into "liberated zones", as they are overtaken and reclaimed back by urban citizens, ordinary people who otherwise lack any institutional power to go on regular strike to express their discontent.[70] In Figure 1., see an aerial comparison of the dominant roundabout in Tahrir Square before the January revolution and

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[66] Taha, 'Political Role of Urban Space Reflections on the Current and Future Scene in Cairo-Egypt', 40.
[67] Noah Shachtman, 'How Many People Are in Tahrir Square? Here's How to Tell', *Wired*, accessed 29 July 2024, https://www.wired.com/2011/02/how-many-people-are-in-tahrir-square-heres-how-to-tell/.
[68] Ahmad Borhan, „Peripheralization and Infrastructural Violence", Amar, Sharp, and Wahby, *Cairo Securitized,* 311.
[69] Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious* (Princeton University Press, 1971), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv7n0cmg.
[70] Bayat, *Life as Politics*.

after the 2019 renovation.

Figure 1. Comparison of Tahrir Square from Aerial View, edited by the author, source: https://7asreeat.com/13745/2020/06/في-8-صور-شاهد-ميدان-التحرير-بعد-التطوير/,

The appearance of the "Ismailia" districts has continued to change and Tahrir has to some extent become a reflection of the materiality of the regime under Abdul Gamal Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak. As of 2011, at the time of the revolution, it was the place where the autocratic regime took its physical form in the most obvious way. On the south side of the square stood an office building known as the Mogamma (literally "a complex"), a concrete, multi-storey giant built in the style of socialist realism, at that time probably the most hated building in all of Egypt. Mogamma brought together administrative departments issuing passports, building permits, social administration, registry offices issuing marriage

certificates, etc., so no Cairo citizen avoided visiting Mogamma at least once in his lifetime. The building had virtually become the epitome of Egyptian bureaucracy, inefficiency, and corruption. In the block on the northwest side adjacent to Tahrir Square stood the headquarters of Mubarak's National Democratic Party, which was raided and set on fire during the January 2011 protests.[71] In the middle of the square stood a circular lawn with a large roundabout around it, and the aerial photos of the occupation of this oval part of the square went around the world and became a symbol of the Egyptian Revolution and Arab Spring.

Thirteen years after the revolution, Tahrir Square has undergone significant transformations. The square now features numerous big concrete grey containers with palms and trees scattered throughout the Tahrir Square with an advertised intent to, of course, beautify the space. At the same time, however, they pose barriers to movement, making it harder to gather in great numbers. In 2019 Egypt's Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly ordered a swift renovation of Tahrir Square as part of the "Historic Cairo Project."[72] The central lawn of the large roundabout, where protesters once camped in January 2011, has been largely paved over, with the entire area elevated above street level. In the middle of the newly built giant pedestal was installed a three-thousand-year-old obelisk of King Ramses II. Four sphinxes from the palace complex of Luxor have also been moved to Tahrir Square.[73]

The regime has gradually withdrawn its physical presence from Tahrir Square and its surroundings. The already half-destroyed, fire-charred National Democratic Party headquarters, a reminiscent symbol of the revolution, was demolished at the end of May 2015.[74] In January 2024, Egyptian officials finally unveiled a future plan for the land on which the headquarters stood. The auction to develop the site was won by a consortium of Emirati investors who intend to build office buildings, a crowdsourcing center, a shopping

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[71] Nezar Alsayyad, 'Opinion | Cairo's Roundabout Revolution', *The New York Times*, 14 April 2011, sec. Opinion, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/14/opinion/14alsayyad.html.
[72] 'Tahrir Square to Be Renovated as Part of Historic Cairo Project - Politics - Egypt', Ahram Online, accessed 13 July 2024, https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/343978/Egypt/Politics-/Tahrir-Square-to-be-renovated-as-part-of-Historic-.aspx.
[73] 'Cairo's Tahrir Square given Facelift Decade after Egyptian Revolution', Middle East Eye, accessed 27 July 2024, https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/egypt-tahrir-square-cairo-renovation-arab-spring.
[74] Tarek Radwan, 'The NDP Building Demolition: Erasing a Memory or Moving On?', *Atlantic Council* (blog), 17 June 2015, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-ndp-building-demolition-erasing-a-memory-or-moving-on/.

mall, a branch of a French university, dorms, and a three-star hotel on the site. The aim is to capitalize on the lucrative central location of the land and to "attract international students, young tourists, and start-up investors".[75]

The plans to evacuate Mogamma and completely transform the place have been on the table since 2015 when the Government announced the construction of the New Administrative Capital. This was confirmed in 2020 when President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi issued a decision to remove the building from public benefit status. The Mogamma building was evacuated, and the property was transferred to the Egyptian Sovereign Fund, with employees moved to alternative locations.[76] The new development plan for the complex has been underway since 2021 to convert the building into a multi-use facility featuring commercial sections and a luxury hotel built in a "manner consistent with the new civilized appearance of the Egyptian capital".[77]

4.2.2. A City of Bridges and Freeways

Leaving Tahrir Square behind, other segments of the city have undergone a major facelift in recent years. In terms of the general landscape makeover of Cairo, there is a transformation in the overall permeability of the city center. Reuters called El-Sisi "An authoritarian leader with a penchant for the bridges", while in fact, a mega construction of 40 bridges is underway to reduce chronic congestion in the city.[78] In Greater Cairo, wide roads and bridges have been built at an unusually fast pace in recent years. As Maged Mandour notes, the quality of the planning of these bridges and the resulting benefits to residents remain questionable; however, the new network of freeways and bridges across densely populated neighborhoods will increase the mobility of the armed forces in the event of a need to deploy the troops to

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[75] 'Egyptian Official Unveils Destiny of Land Used to House Headquarters of Dissolved National Democratic Party', EgyptToday, 7 January 2024, https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/129629/Egyptian-official-unveils-destiny-of-land-used-to-house-headquarters.

[76] Hassan Al-Masry, حسن المصري, 'العاصمة الإدارية ترسم نهاية المبنى العملاق.. هذه حكاية مجمع التحرير رمز البيروقراطية في مصر', الجزيرة نت, 10 November 2021, https://www.aljazeera.net/encyclopedia/2021/11/10/مجمع-التحرير-من-مبنى-حكومي-تاريخي-إلى.

[77] *In original*: "وبما يتناسب مع المظهر الحضاري الجديد للعاصمة المصرية", from https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/6242074?__cf_chl_tk=Xy9eiuXuvtVWCyz2aKun.wIicNicK.7wIJHp2_vipos-1720872001-0.0.1.1-3881, accessed 13 July 2024.

[78] Aidan Lewis, 'Egypt's Sisi: Authoritarian Leader with Penchant for Bridges', *Reuters*, 2 April 2024, sec. Africa, https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/egypts-sisi-authoritarian-leader-with-penchant-bridges-2024-04-02/.

the city.[79]

The above-mentioned Rabaa al-Adawiya Square, the site of a brutal military crackdown on pro-Morsi protesters, also underwent an architectural transformation. Technically, it never was square but a large intersection next to the Rabaa al-Adawiya Square Mosque. A new wide flyover road now arches over the intersection and its construction was also supposed to improve traffic. At the same time the new "bridge" now makes the formerly open intersection a long underpass, as well as creates an elevated spot for monitoring the area or for possible target shooting in case of future violent demonstrations.[80]

4.2.3. Cairo's Informal Areas and the New Towns

In the last 10 years, Cairo has been experiencing a building boom, where older neighborhoods in the city's historical center are being demolished and rebuilt.[81] It is impossible to talk about the urban structure in Cairo and not pay attention to the informal settlements and whole informal districts, which are scattered in big chunks of land throughout Greater and Downtown Cairo. These areas made of informal housing or "slums" are called *'ashwa'yyat* in Egyptian Arabic, literally meaning "haphazard", aptly describing the random structure of buildings and adjacent infrastructure, which emerged organically from below and without state involvement.[82]

As I already mentioned above, Cairo is continuously growing in population. Since the establishment of the independent Egyptian republic, the population has risen from 2.5 million, and Cairo has expanded to its current 22 million residents. At the same time, due to the lack of state support for development and the building of the necessary infrastructure and incomplete laws, the phenomenon of informal areas has become typical of Cairo. As of 2006, the neighborhoods classified by the government as "informal" were estimated to accommodate up to 65% of Cairo's population, i.e. over 10 million people.[83]

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[79] Maged Mandour, 'The Sinister Side of Sisi's Urban Development', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 10 May 2021, https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/84504.
[80] Jan-Werner Müller, 'On the Square', *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 8 April 2024, 01914537241244822, https://doi.org/10.1177/01914537241244822.
[81] 'Egypt's Audacious Plan to Build a New Capital in the Desert', Magazine, 25 July 2024, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/article/egypts-audacious-plan-to-build-a-new-capital-in-the-desert-feature.
[82] Deen Sharp, 'Haphazard Urbanisation: Urban Informality, Politics and Power in Egypt', *Urban Studies* 59, no. 4 (1 March 2022): 734–49, https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980211040927.
[83] Visions, Facts Voices. "Cairo's informal areas between urban challenges and hidden potentials." *GTZ* (2009).'Cairo, Egypt Population (2024) - Population Stat'.

Already during Hussein Mubarak's tenure, the government began to tackle the problem with a tougher approach to illegal urbanization by deploying coercive apparatuses and militarising informal districts. In 2008, Egypt's General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP) introduced an urban development vision called "Cairo 2050", unveiling an ambitious plan for the city's rearrangement and revitalization, with eviction and resettlement of people living in informal districts being a vital part of the plan.[84] However, the revolutionary period suspended the execution, and the Cairo 2050 plan was quietly abandoned after the deposition of Mubarak and the turbulent political years that followed.[85]

Having said that, the issue of informal settlements scattered throughout Cairo has not disappeared, and the new government under General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has picked up where the previous administration left off. With even greater vigor, the Cairo Governorate and the Ministry of Housing, Utilities & Urban Communities elaborated plans to transform the urban center and deal with the *'ashwa'yyat*. Since the new military regime came to power in 2013, addressing informal urban areas has been a priority for the administration. The very goal of the current regime is to eliminate them and create a "slum-free" Cairo, which is stated in the new country's developmental plan "Egypt 2030" vision. The military regime essentially declared war against the *'ashwa'yyat*, while these areas, together with the "unmanageable" way of life and economic activities of the locals, are heavily securitized. Even more than before the revolution of 2011, the unplanned informal areas became the embodiment of illegality and a threat to societal prosperity.[86] In fact, the informal areas were termed as a central threat to the state and society, as the government links poverty with crime.[87] In the official documents and governmental websites, the *'ashwa'yyat* are more likely to be referred to as "unsafe areas" (*manātiq ghair āmina*).[88]

4.2.3.1. Brand New Towns in the Desert

The idea of creating new towns is not new in Egypt. For instance, there was a project of New

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[84] Sharp, 'Haphazard Urbanisation'.
[85] 'Cairo 2050 Revisited: A Planning Logic - Tadamun', accessed 10 July 2024, https://www.tadamun.co/introduction-cairo-2050-planning-logic/?lang=en.
[86] Laura Monfleuer, Challenging Urban Militarization in Post-2011 Downtown Cairo: Walls and Checkpoints in *Cairo Securitized: Reconceiving Urban Justice and Social Resilience* (Cairo, EGYPT: American University in Cairo Press, 2024), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cuni/detail.action?docID=7384808.
[87] Sharp, 'Haphazard Urbanisation'.
[88] 'تجربة مصرية استثنائية في القضاء على العشوائيات', accessed 23 July 2024, https://beta.sis.gov.eg//ar/المركز-الإعلامي/الملفات/تجربة-مصرية-استثنائية-في-القضاء-على-العشوائيات/.

Cairo introduced in the 1980s aimed to accommodate the rapidly growing working class of Greater Cairo by developing new urban areas in the desert. The first initiative and plans for tackling the informal areas as well as for resettlement of people living there, started already during Sadat's era, when the pace of informal urban development increased sharply. In 1977, Sadat launched the New Towns policy. The initial logic behind the New Towns policy and reallocation of the people was to address the housing crisis and prevent further semi-or-illegal urbanization of public agricultural land.[89] But at the same time, it is critical for the modern state, to pull people out of the uncontrollable and unmanageable concrete jungle, living completely separate from the state, and thriving off the grey economy. These projects of New Towns were strategically located on the periphery and built in the desert, away from the densely populated and politically volatile urban centers.[90]

Since the 1980s, the Cairo Governorate has continuously planned the development and growth of the city into the desert, strategically resettling residents from informal settlements such as the Bulaq Abu al-'Ila neighborhood, al-Duwaiqa, Manshiyat Nasi, Dar al-Salam, and others to the new neighborhoods built on the peripheries of Cairo.[91] Egypt-based urbanist and economist David Sims has been a vocal critique of the government's urban expansion to the desserts surrounding Cairo, writing about the social and environmental problems arising from such policies and, not least, pointing to the fact that despite the governmental efforts, the grand projects and desert settlements remain "stubbornly uninhabited".[92]

Nicholas Simcik Arese embarked on a study of Haram town, one of the new town gated districts built up in the deserts during the early 2000s and opened in 2007. Haram district started out as a state-funded social urban project to offer affordable housing to low-income families to relieve overcrowded neighborhoods in downtown Cairo. After implementation, it became apparent that housing and a general lifestyle requiring car ownership were far beyond the financial reach of people living in informal neighborhoods, and homebuyers from the middle and upper middle classes moved into Haram City. In 2008, however, the

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[89] Dina Shehayeb, 'Cairo's Informal Areas Between Urban Challenges and Hidden Potentials', 1 July 2009, https://www.academia.edu/2484752/Cairo_s_Informal_Areas_Between_Urban_Challenges_and_Hidden_Potentials.

[90] Sharp, 'Haphazard Urbanisation'.

[91] Ahmad Borham, 'Peripheralization and Infrastructural Violence' in *Cairo Securitized, 310*.

[92] David E. Sims, *Egypt's Desert Dreams: Development or Disaster?*, New edition. (Cairo, Egypt ; The American University in Cairo Press, 2018).

government was quick to mobilize after the rockslide disaster in the informal settlement of Duwiqa.[93] The rockslides and rubble buried and injured hundreds of people, and after this tragedy, the Cairo governorate razed the remains of buildings and ordered the legal eviction of 1500 families into Haram City.[94]

Moving on to our case study time frame, his analysis also offers an interesting insight into the mode of behavior adopted by the resettled people from the informal areas during the events of the Arab Spring. In the turbulent years of 2011-2013, while central Cairo was alive with revolutionary events, economic and social unrest, and the constitutional debate, in Haram City there was quiet. "Either because they could not afford to travel to Tahrir Square or because of political differences, most Haram City residents watched mass mobilizations through their flickering television screens".[95]

4.2.3.2. Post-2013 War on Slums

The appointed director of the Informal Settlements Development Fund, Khalil Sadeeq, stated in 2019 that the plan was to eradicate slums by 2030, creating a completely "slum-free Egypt.[96] In 2016, the Egyptian Ministry of Planning and Economic Development issued a 300-page document "Egypt 2030" laying out a comprehensive planning initiative, as part of the national strategy for development. The Egypt 2030 project represents a government vision for the country in areas as wide as economic development, social security, health, and environment. The tenth pillar of the vision is urban development, with Cairo at the center of the development plans.[97]

One of the objectives listed in 2030 Egypt's vision is to assume "control of the informal settlement phenomenon and insecure areas" with the ultimate goal of eliminating them altogether, either by total reconstruction and resettlement of the population or by developing the areas through foreign private investments. The government also started to develop a unified national database on the *'ashawa'iyyat*, "calculating their population, their social and economic characteristics and other information required to… support the efficiency of setting an integrated framework to solve the problem of informal settlements and prevent

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[93] Nicholas Simcik Arese, 'Seeing Like a City-state', Amar, Sharp, and Wahby, *Cairo Securitized*.
[94] 'Rockslide Shatters Cairo Shanty Town', France 24, 6 September 2008, https://www.france24.com/en/20080906-rockslide-shatters-cairo-shanty-town-egypt-landslide.
[95] Arese, 'Seeing Like a City-state', 301.
[96] Sharp, 'Haphazard Urbanisation'.
[97] 'Egypt 2030', accessed 24 January 2024, http://www.cairo.gov.eg/en/Pages/2030.aspx.

their expansion".[98]

In 2016 there were 357 areas classified as "slums" located in Greater Cairo, according to the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAMPAS).[99] Between 2016 and 2023, the residents of those informal areas designated as slums were moved to 246,000 housing units in Cairo's suburban areas. Thousands of families were relocated to the newly erected Al-Asmarat district, an area providing social housing for low-income families inaugurated in 2017 by the Cairo municipal authority.[100] The State Information Service published a report on "Egypt's Exceptional Experience in Eliminating the 'ashawa'iyyat" in March 2024, reporting the progress on eliminating the "unsafe areas" and integrating the "unplanned areas", which is how the political authorities categorize informal areas. The report also lists the exact number of thousands of families from the "unsafe areas" targeted yet to be resettled to Al-Asmarat and other newly constructed neighborhoods with social housing.[101] As to these new neighborhoods, the director of the Informal Settlements Development Fund commented in an interview from 2018 on the insufficient number of shops and the overall infrastructure in the Al-Asmarat, forcing the resettled people (often without personal vehicles) to travel by public transportation to cater for basic goods: "We've delayed the openings of these shops, because we're working on unifying the styles of their facades, so they all look the same and conform to an image of the ideal society. We won't leave any room for randomness to come back to this area again".[102]

4.2.3.3. Demolition of the Maspero Triangle

One of the rather publicized cases of demolition of an entire informal neighborhood, also in terms of the scale of government intervention and the money invested, was the destruction of the so-called Maspero Triangle (*al-muthallath Masbero*). This area is located right in the

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[98] 'Egypt 2030', 271.
[99] 'Egypt Spends LE40B on Moving Slum Residents to Alternative-Housing Units', EgyptToday, 4 October 2023, https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/127418/Egypt-spends-LE40B-on-moving-slum-residents-to-alternative-housing.
[100] Ibrahim Ezzeddine, 'Urban Communities as Alternative to Slums: A Case Study of Egypt's Asmarat', *Arab Reform Initiative*, 18 July 2024, https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/urban-communities-as-alternative-to-slums-a-case-study-of-egypts-asmarat/.
[101] 'تجربة مصرية استثنائية في القضاء على العشوائيات', accessed 23 June 2024, https://beta.sis.gov.eg//ar/المركز-الإعلامي/الملفات/تجربة-مصرية-استثنائية-في-القضاء-على-العشوائيات/.
[102] 'Interview: On Developing the Maspero Triangle and the Future of the Asmarat Housing Project', Mada Masr, accessed 28 July 2024, https://www.madamasr.com/en/2018/08/04/feature/politics/interview-on-justice-in-the-development-of-the-maspero-triangle-and-the-future-of-the-asmarat-housing-project/.

centre of Cairo, its history dates back to the 14th century and was rebuilt under the Khedivate Egypt in the 19th century.[103] The Maspero triangle is adjacent to Tahrir Square and during the 2011 uprising, the whole area was abuzz with protests and some of the most violent clashes with police also took place in this area. Due to its proximity to Tahrir, communities in Maspero were also a key factor in sustaining the occupied square and defending the protesters during the 18 days of the January revolution.[104]

In 2024, the Maspero Triangle is just rubbles and a construction site. The demolition of the Maspero Triangle was executed in 2018, coincidentally around the same time as El-Sisi was re-elected as the President. Residents of the area were offered several options as to what to do after the demolition started. They could either relocate to the al-Asmarat district, accept financial compensation of approx. 5500 USD or return to Maspero after the reconstruction, where they would have guaranteed apartments they could rent or buy at increased market cost. The majority opted for either relocation or financial compensation, vacating the district for the future upper middle-class residents to move in.[105] In Figure 2., see a comparison of an aerial photo of the Maspero Triangle before the demolition and a visualization of the chosen project of the area revitalization.

There is already a recent precedent for how the return of residents back to Maspero might proceed. In 2015, the Cairo administration had the informal Tal al-ʻAqārib neighborhood demolished and "upgraded", with residents being offered a similar settlement, but commercial plans for the area were much more modest compared to the Maspero triangle as it is not a prime location. People who chose to return moved back as tenants into the houses they used to own. The streets in the neighborhood are now made up of uniform six-story houses, the actual spaces between the houses have been widened, and the open streets are now patrolled much more frequently by police officers.[106]

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[103] 'Maspero Parallel Participatory Project by Madd Platform - Issuu', 8 February 2016, https://issuu.com/maddplatform/docs/maspero_parallel_participatory_proj.
[104] Dina Wahba, 'Urban Rights and Local Politics in Egypt: The Case of the Maspero Triangle', *Arab Reform Initiative*, 23 January 2020, https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/urban-rights-and-local-politics-in-egypt-the-case-of-the-maspero-triangle/.
[105] Mandour, 'The Sinister Side of Sisi's Urban Development'.
[106] Mohamed Tariq, 'فارس تل العقارب', *Mada Masr*, 7 March 2021, https://www.madamasr.com/2021/03/07/feature/سياسة/فارس-تل-العقارب/.

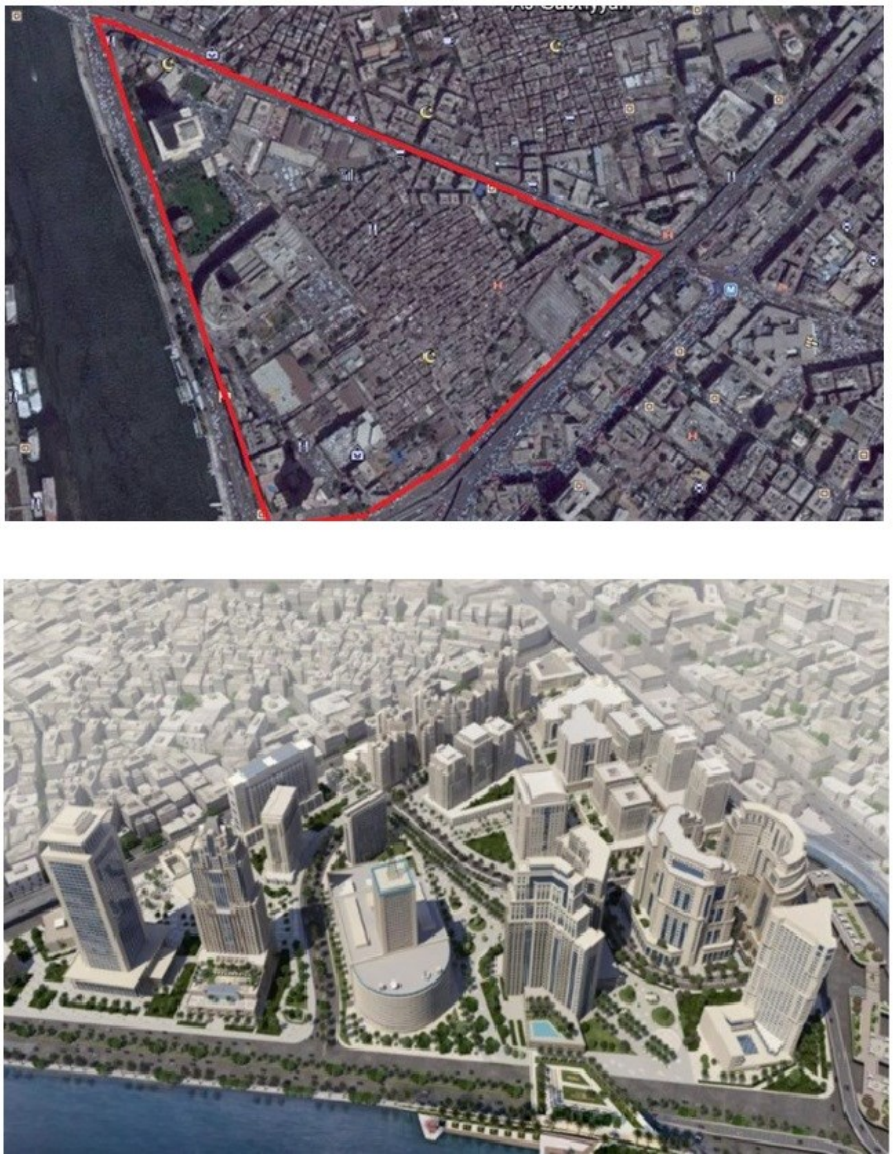

Figure 2, Development of the Maspero Triangle, edited by the author, source: https://www.propertyfinder.eg/blog/مشروع-مثلث-ماسبيرو/.

There are several layers to be found in the government's dealing with the informal areas. As Bayat pointed out, the political elites are in control of the narrative about the *'ashawa'iyyat* and the people living in them. Since the 90s onwards, the communities were more and more often marked as deviant from the normality of a modern city, triggering a "social disease" as people there struggled with joblessness and poverty. "The *'ashawa'iyyat* are perceived as abnormal places where, in modern conventional wisdom, the "non-modern" and thus "non-urban" people, that is, the villagers, the traditionalists, the non-conformists and the

unintegrated live".[107] The post-2013 political leadership has mastered the narrative surrounding the *'ashawa'iyyat* and successfully militarized the areas. The informal areas are portrayed as a breeding ground for terrorism, associating the urban poor living with militant Islamism.[108]

Deen Sharp, a co-director of the Center for Advanced Urban Research at the LSE, has been long-term investigating the policies of the Egyptian State towards the informal areas. He notes two main axes in the relationship of the Egyptian state to informal areas after 2013. The first is the continued association of violent political Islamism with urban agglomerations in Greater Cairo. The second axis is the acknowledgment of the threat to the stability of the regime coming from the densely populated informal semi-legal areas, as it was the epicenter of the 2011 uprising.

4.3. New Administrative Capital

The next section deals with the "New Administrative Capital" (al-'asimah al-idariya al-gidida). A newly erected site for all the most important state institutions, including the presidential Palace, has been under construction since 2015 when El-Sisi's government first introduced the intent to move the crucial institutions outside of the cramped Cairo.

In the previous part about the governmental dealings with informal areas, I discussed the Egyptian administration's longstanding penchant for pushing people out of Cairo's busy downtown and into the periphery, whether it's through demolitions and eviction orders or socioeconomic incentives to move into gated suburban communities far from the troubled and "unsafe" city center. In the case of the New Administrative Capital, however, it is the physicality of government that is moving away from the populous city. Despite government incentives to urbanize the desert through the construction of satellite cities, most Egyptians continue to live in existing settlements in the fertile Nile Valley and Delta. El-Sisi's spectacular New Administrative City project, built in the desert halfway between Cairo and Suez, expects to finally end past failures in building the Cairo New Towns and give Egypt a

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[107] Asef Bayat and Eric Denis, 'Who Is Afraid of Ashwaiyyat? Urban Change and Politics in Egypt', *Environment and Urbanization* 12, no. 2 (1 October 2000): 185–99, https://doi.org/10.1177/095624780001200215, 197.

[108] Iman el Gendy, 'أخيرًا يتحقق الحلم .. مصر بدون عشوائيات', *alWafd*, 22 July 2020 2024, https://www.alwafd.news/تحقيقات-وحوارات/3093752-أخيرًا-يتحقق-الحلم-مصر-بدون-عشوائيات.

world-class capital that will attract the middle class and foreign investment, while also allowing the government to escape the urban disorder of the Historical Cairo.[109]

The New Administrative Capital (hereinafter referred to as "NAC" or "Capital") is located around 45 kilometers east of Cairo.[110] The drive from downtown Cairo to the NAC takes over an hour by car, and the driver can choose between two main routes, north or south around a satellite town called "New Cairo". While the satellite imagery from 2014 shows nothing but bare desert on the site[111], at the moment of writing this thesis (by mid-2024), there are already fully functioning ministry buildings, relocated both the chambers of Parliament and Presidential Palace, and also a new lavish "People's Square".[112] The government announced the project during the Egyptian Economic Development Conference on March 13, 2015, as part of the broader Egypt's Vision 2030.[113] In Figure 3. the map shows the location and estimated area of the NAC.

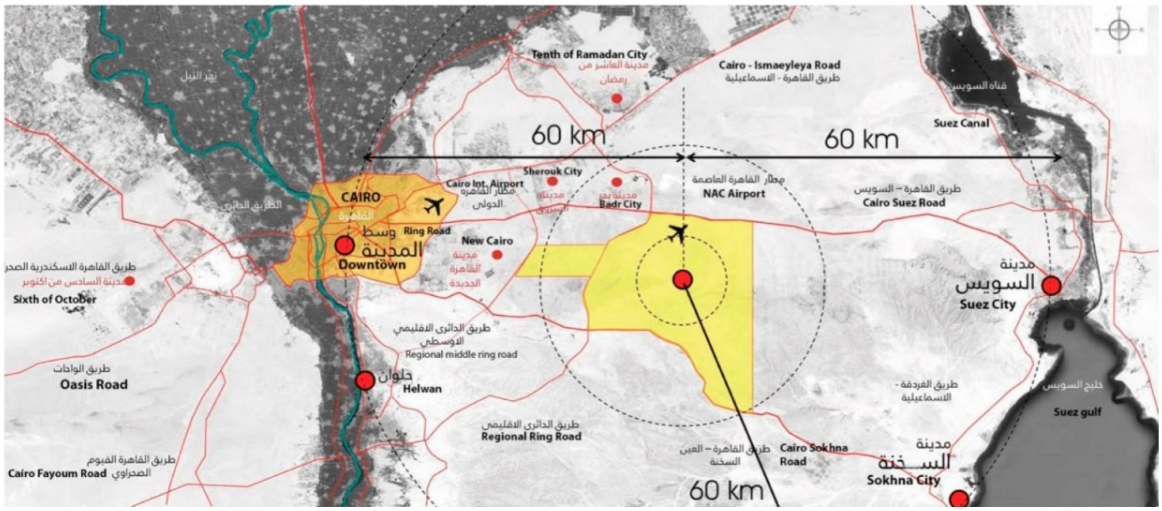

Figure 3, the New Administrative Capital, source: https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/12/5046

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[109] Julian Bolleter and Robert Cameron, 'A Critical Landscape and Urban Design Analysis of Egypt's New Administrative Capital City', *Journal of Landscape Architecture* 16, no. 1 (2 January 2021): 8–19, https://doi.org/10.1080/18626033.2021.1948183.

[110] Hassan Elmouelhi, 'New Administrative Capital in Cairo: Power, Urban Development vs. Social Injustice – an Egyptian Model of Neoliberalism', 2019, 215–54, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839437803-007.

[111] Alan Taylor, 'Photos: Egypt's New Capital-City Megaproject - The Atlantic', accessed 25 July 2024, https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2023/08/photos-egypt-new-administrative-capital-megaproject/675179/.

[112] Google Earth, "New Administrative Capital", https://earth.google.com/web/@30.02142731,31.72321021,304.13226388a,6882.97936776d,35y,360h,0t,0r/data=OgMKATA.

[113] 'New Administrative Capital', accessed 25 June 2024, https://www.presidency.eg/en/-المشاريع-القومية/العاصمة-الإدارية-الجديدة/.

The project to build a new greenfield capital involves not only the relocation and construction of key state institutions but also the construction of residential buildings for the administrators containing 25 thousand housing units, a new financial and commercial district, a diplomatic quarter, hotels, and leisure facilities. The relocation of all the governmental institutions takes place in multiple waves. By March 2023, 30,000 state employees were moved into the new Capital. In the Capital, ten ministerial complexes will eventually house 34 ministries, including the new giant headquarters for the Ministry of Defense.[114] The complex, named "The Octagon" will be the largest Defense Headquarters in the world once finished and will house all the branches of the Egyptian Armed Forces.[115]

The mega-project encompasses a series of pompous smaller plans such as the construction of the tallest building on the African continent, the Islamic Cultural Centre with a lavish grand mosque, a giant Coptic Cathedral, or an artificial waterway with a series of parks along its banks dubbed a "Green River".[116] The responsible authority for the construction of the NAC was the Ministry of Housing, Utilities & Urban Development as stated in the original state document on Egypt 2030 vision.[117] Nevertheless, the control over the project of development of the Capital was transferred later in 2016 to the Egyptian Army, which also appointed a different consortium of urban design and development companies to carry on with a modified proposal. Apparently, this is also the reason why, until recently, designs and 3D visualizations of NAC not matching the actual plan were circulating in the media, as they used the original designs from the Skidmore, Owings & Merrill collective.[118]

It had been envisioned from the beginning that substantial financial investment would come from the private sector.[119] It was envisaged that a significant portion of the financial capital for construction would come from the private sector, while project plans were presented in partnership with the United Arab Emirates. The Emirati developers eventually backed down and were replaced by an Egyptian state-owned company called Administrative Capital for

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[114] '30,000 State Employees to Be Relocated to Egypt's New Administrative Capital by March: Official - Urban & Transport - Egypt', Ahram Online, accessed 31 July 2024, https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/483660.aspx.
[115] 'The Octagon', Overview, 16 June 2019, https://www.over-view.com/overviews/the-octagon.
[116] 'New Administrative Capital'.
[117] 'Egypt 2030', accessed 25 June 2024, https://mped.gov.eg/DynamicPage?id=115&lang=en, 230.
[118] Bolleter and Cameron, 'A Critical Landscape and Urban Design Analysis of Egypt's New Administrative Capital City', 10.
[119] 'Egypt 2030'.

Urban Development, in which the Egyptian military has a controlling stake.[120] To date however, the Gulf States have been key investors and drivers of the project, not only keeping afloat the viability of the completion of NAC but also financially backing Egypt's government during the difficult pandemic years then coupled with the consequences of the Russian invasion to Ukraine on Egypt's economy.[121]

4.3.1. "Go where the protester can't go"

Maged Mandour, an Egyptian political analyst, identifies the raids and attacks on police stations during the early days of the 2011 uprising as one of the main impetuses that urged the current government to alter the demographic composition in Cairo's downtown and to relocate the key institutions to the New Administrative Capital.[122] It remains telling that the historical center Cauro was virtually abandoned by the regime as it distanced itself over forty kilometers from the urban agglomeration. At the same time, due to the high real estate prices in the NAC, the proximity to key government institutions, and the urban layout adapted to automobile mobility, the local residential area will attract and anchor mainly the wealthy Egyptian elite. That is, the people who are the backbone and also the main benefiters of the persistent autocratic system with praetorian tendencies and who are thus least likely to rebel against it. The second dominant class of people that the NAC's vision is to attract are foreign investors, wealthy expats, and "digital nomads", who, however, also hardly have stakes in the country's political liberalization, meaning possible destabilization.

Speaking globally, there has been a trend of moving governmental institutions outside of the populous cities and relocating them into a city, which was specifically designed to serve a national capital. Historically, there are several examples of the construction of new purpose-built capitals. During the twentieth century, as more countries gained independence from colonial rule, the state administrations opted for relocation to move away from the overpopulated economic hubs.[123] These examples include Kazakhstan's relocation of its

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[120] Yasser Elsheshtawy, 'Egypt's New Administrative Capital Is Another Desert Folly', *DAWN* (blog), 30 June 2023, https://dawnmena.org/egypts-new-administrative-capital-is-another-desert-folly/.
[121] Declan Walsh and Vivian Yee, 'A New Capital Worthy of the Pharaohs Rises in Egypt, but at What Price?', *The New York Times*, 8 October 2022, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/08/world/middleeast/egypt-new-administrative-capital.html.
[122] Maged Mandour, 'The Sinister Side of Sisi's Urban Development', 10 May 2021, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, accessed 24 September 2023, https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/84504.
[123] Jan-Werner Müller, 'Democratic Designs: Show Me What Democracy Looks like - The

capital from Almaty to the planned city of Astana (now Nur-Sultan) in 1998, Nigeria's transfer of its state administration from Lagos to Abuja in 1991, and Pakistan's move of its capital from Karachi to the planned city of Islamabad.[124]

Recently, Myanmar completed the construction of its new administrative capital Naypyidaw in 2012, located 320 kilometers north of the then-time capital Yangoon. Built practically in the middle of bamboo forests, the deserted capital of pompous modern architecture is populated almost entirely by the military regime's senior generals and high-profile governmental officials. They live and work in guarded zones, where the public has only limited access.[125] In 2023, the Indonesian government announced the construction of a new capital, a "high-tech city" and a "green metropolis" built from scratch on Borneo Island.[126]

4.3.2. A Capital. But to whom and for whom?

The aerial photos of the half-done Capital show vehicular dominance of the district. Judging the architectural and urban layout of the city from the user perspective, the movement around the NAC is essentially impossible without a car, given the major freeways cutting the district basically cuts the city into several isolated islands and the "Green River" in the middle.[127] The mere distances between government districts and neighborhoods designated for housing and leisure are also a factor. The generous public space planning that frames the entire project alludes to the fact that all "public space" in the NAC is isolated space pockets tucked between wide roads, as instead of walkable boulevards, the Capital is centered around freeways. A pedestrian in the center of the new capital can enjoy the majestic columns, fountains, and scaled-down sphinxes or pyramids in the main square in front of the House of Representatives, but given the distances involved, it is not too feasible to move between institutions on foot; moreover, one soon encounters a highway cutting the walk. The sites are functionally meant to be enjoyed as a pleasing view from a passing car, and as Michelle

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Architectural Review', accessed 26 July 2024, https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/democratic-designs.

[124] 'Eight Countries That Moved Their Capitals', *BBC News*, 13 March 2015, sec. World, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-31877909.

[125] The New York Times, 'Built to Order: Myanmar's New Capital Isolates and Insulates Junta', *The New York Times*, 24 June 2008, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/24/world/asia/24myanmar-sub.html.

[126] Hannah Beech, 'What's a President to Do When a Nation's Capital Is Sinking? Move It.', *The New York Times*, 16 May 2023, sec. Headway, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/05/16/headway/indonesia-nusantara-jakarta.html.

[127] Egypt Real estate Interactive Map, *Mapping Properties*, accessed 20 July 2024, https://mapping.properties/login-page/.

Dune put it "The city's echoing emptiness symbolizes the fact that most Egyptian citizens have no place in Sisi's vision."[128]

5. Discussion

Since the failed revolution of the Arab Spring uprisings, the liberal media reported on the strengthening of authoritarianism in Egypt highlighting the major milestones such as changes in legislation regulating presidential powers or the imprisonment of political opponents and dissent. Meanwhile, a quiet regime contra-revolution has taken over the urban spaces in Cairo, step-by-step completely transforming the physical representation of political power in all of the city. Architects and urban designers are aware of how different spaces can facilitate democratic functions when designing public spaces and government buildings.

A political philosopher Jan Werner-Müller elucidates that public spaces and assemblies have one rather overlooked democratic function, which is prefigurative politics.[129] The idea is to "prefigure" or model the future society in the present, demonstrating the feasibility and desirability of alternative ways of living and organizing. In this scenario “heterogenous set of different groups might come together, minimally united around some goals and committed to being in a particular space, and only gradually work out new forms of living together”.[130] However, this function remains unfulfilled in the New Administrative Capital, being a remote and hard-to-access city for Cairene crowds, itself accommodating a rather homogeneous upper middle class with similar political alliances.

The construction of the New Administrative Capital was allegedly intended to alleviate congestion in Cairo, but it also established a new center of power physically distanced from potential sites of dissent. The NAC is an example of a public space that discourages large gatherings and protests through spatial segmentation and controlled access points. Not to mention that if someone in the future got the idea to hold a demonstration in front of the new Presidential Palace at the People’s Square, they would have to organize a motorcade or bus service to the site, whereby they would arrive at a square adjacent to the headquarters of Republican Guard. The two access freeways into the city are easily blocked and regular mass

[128] Michele Dunne, ‘Sisi Builds a Green Zone for Egypt’, *The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 27 November 2018, https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2018/12/sisi-builds-a-green-zone-for-egypt?lang=en.
[129] Müller, ‘On the Square’.
[130] Müller, 8.

transportation to the new administration's capital will be provided by the Light Rail Transit[131], which would be easily taken out of service by the government in the event of a crisis.

The government's restructuring of the urban layout of Cairo is depicted in official governmental documents and state media as a path toward a modern, global, and prosperous city. Nevertheless, many of the projects that are underway or are already completed, bear a common secondary feature, which is facilitating rapid and easier containment of resistance forces by the police and the military in case another big-scale mass uprising occurs. When in truth, the infrastructure construction oftentimes disregards the needs or even the safety of pedestrians and urban residents. As an illustration, in the figure below, there is a snapshot of a new bridge under construction, erected mere centimeters from a residential building balcony.

Figure 4., Teraet Al-Zomor Bridge, photos edited by the author, source: https://www.arabnews.com/sites/default/files/styles/n_670_395/public/2020/05/13/2103341-745077817.jpg?itok=Sm4yQHn5

The Egyptian revolution of 2011 was largely an urban revolt, utilizing social network media activism as well, with densely populated informal urban areas allowing for a snowball effect in protest mobilization. Therefore, 'ashawa'iyyat have been repeatedly referred to by journalists and scholars as cradles of mass uprisings. The large-scale urban renewal projects are justified as improving living conditions in those neighborhoods. Initiated by the Egyptian government and largely supported by the private sector, the development of slums is promoting the narrative of state-sponsored prosperity, modernization, and ridding ourselves of unsafe, illegal housing, poverty, and the informal economy. In reality, however, the

[131] 'What Railway Lines to Reach Egypt's New Administrative Capital - EgyptToday', accessed 31 July 2024, https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/99859/What-railway-lines-to-reach-Egypt-s-New-Administrative-Capital.

"upgrading" of informal areas means the state-mandated relocation of thousands of families into easily monitored satellite cities in the periphery and the establishment of new modes of population control in renovated areas through eliminating urban randomness and breaking off the neighborhood ties. At the same time, the continuous development of gated communities for middle-class families segregates different socioeconomic classes and concentrates security measures in certain areas. When looking at the implications of the demolition of the Maspero Triangle and many other informal neighborhoods it led to political marginalization of the urban poor, as they lost their "political street"[132].

The limitation of this research is that in this thesis I only follow the top-down line of urban reshaping. Although state power is a decisive force in urban production, spaces and public areas are constantly reshaped by the people, the "users" who live their everyday lives in them. This could thus be an incentive for further research, which would pick up where the formative power of government left off and would examine the forces of everyday resistance that ordinary residents exert against it. "The language of power is in itself "urbanizing," but the city is left prey to contradictory movements that counterbalance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power."[133]

[132] Asef Bayat, 'Global Tahrir'.
[133] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, 3rd ed., 2011, 95.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to understand how Cairo's recent urban transformation affects the ability of the authoritarian regime to handle a possible popular uprising-type resistance in Cairo. Building on the scholarly concepts of authoritarian resilience and authoritarian learning, I traced the changes in governmental urban strategies and state interventions in the spatial layout in Cairo, in an effort to demonstrate the regime's adaptability to the recent upheaval in the form of the Arab Spring.

In the literature review, I was able to highlight the already existing scholarly body on the intersection between authoritarian resilience and urban planning. Neoliberalism under an authoritarian regime was shown to be among the leading forces separating the city and it citizens into homogenous zones.

Drawing methodological inspiration from other works on similar topics, I decided to employ the Foucauldian framework to analyse the relationship between state power and spaciality.

Building on the modalities of power I analyse various segments of urban development of Cairo. I focused on the Tahrir square, Rabaa al-Adawiya as locations which were the sites of mass scale uprisings during the Arab Spring and which were reshaped dramatically by the government following the coup of 2013.

The main results are that public space has been found to have been crippled by the building of traffic infrastructure restricting pedestrian movement within the city and the installment of monuments, discouraging congregations of masses of people. The state reclaimed the public space for itself, signaling that it is no longer of or for the people.

The regime paints informal areas as unsafe and a threat to social stability. Since they were often labeled as the breeding grounds for the Arab Spring and general urban mobilization, the state has been systematically eliminating them. By "revitalizing" these districts, the regime repopulates them with (often wealthier) demographic groups less likely to join protests or cause unrest.

The New Administrative Capital (NAC) of Egypt showcases the regime's escape into the desert, far from the populous Cairo Downtown. In the case of any uprising, revolt or protests, key government building are safely hidden 50 km away from Cairo. The access paths are limited and easily blocked.

Albeit indirectly, I was able to show that the major top-down managed development projects facilitate easier containment and social control practices of the urban masses living in the agglomeration.

Summary

Diplomová práce se zaměřuje na vztah mezi státní mocí a městským plánováním v kontextu odolnosti autoritářských režimů. Konkrétně pak zkoumá urbánní rozvoj v porevolučním Egyptě s cílem demonstrovat kapacitu režimu přetvářet podobu města tak, aby zabránil dalšímu masovému lidovému povstání po vzoru lednové revoluce během Arabského jara. Práce sleduje státní s veřejným prostorem, řízené územním plánovaním a revitalizačními projekty ve Káhiře a je dokumentuje přetvoření a reorganizování městského uspořádání v Káhiře od vojenského převratu v roce 2013. Metodologicky je výzkumu založen na jedno případové studii, přičemž využívá jako primární zdroje územní plány, satelitní snímky a oficiální dokumenty vydané Egyptskou vládou týkající se městského rozvoje.

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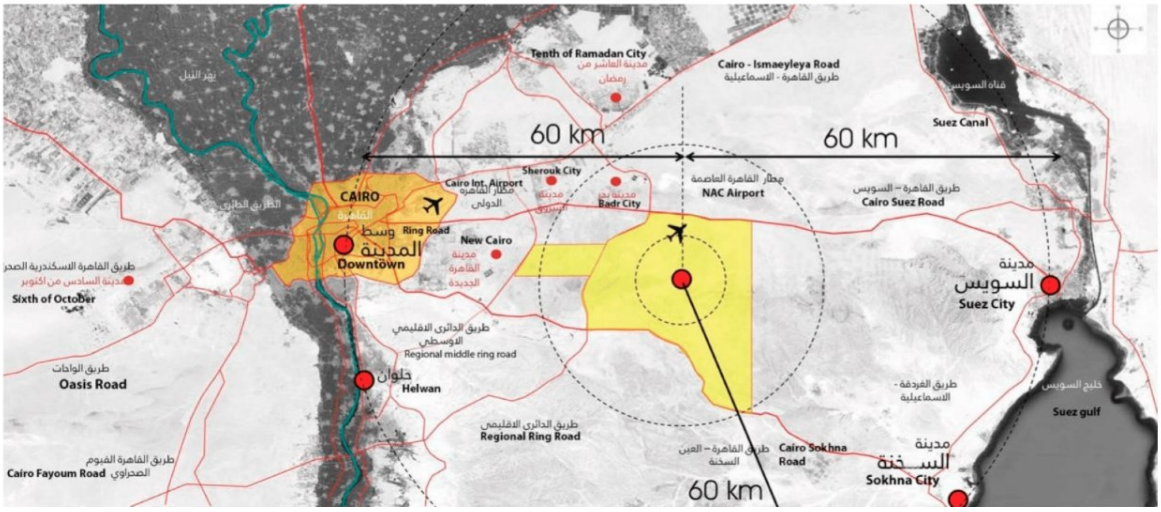
List of Appendices

Appendix no. 1: Figure 1. Comparison of Tahrir Square from Aerial View, edited by the author, source:
https://7asreeat.com/13745/2020/06/في-8-صور-شاهد-ميدان-التحرير-بعد-التطوير/,

Appendix no. 2: Figure 2, Development of the Maspero Triangle, edited by the author, source: https://www.propertyfinder.eg/blog/مشروع-مثلث-ماسبيرو/.

Appendix no.3: Figure 3, the New Administrative Capital, source: https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/12/5046



Appendix no.4: Figure 4., Teraet Al-Zomor Bridge, photos edited by the author, source: https://www.arabnews.com/sites/default/files/styles/n_670_395/public/2020/05/13/2103341-745077817.jpg?itok=Sm4yQHn5