



The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture
at Harvard University and the
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

EGYPT

Background Information Paper

Prepared for the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture
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EGYPT

Primary Information

Country:	Arab Republic of Egypt
Capital:	Cairo
Population:	42 million
Growth rate	2.3%
Density	39.9 persons/square kilometer
Urban	45%
Urban growth rate	3.0%
Area:	1,002,000 square kilometers
Geography:	Five major regions: the Nile Delta, an area of rich agricultural land; the Nile Valley, a narrow belt of fertile land; the Western Desert, which is part of the great Sahara Desert; the Eastern Desert, whose highlands along the Red Sea are rich in mineral deposits; and the Sinai Peninsula, which is largely undeveloped and contains mineral and offshore oil deposits.
Climate:	Temperate in the Delta, and hot and arid elsewhere.
Language:	Arabic
Religion:	Islam
Currency:	Egyptian pound. 1 LE = US \$ 1.40
Per Capita Income:	GNP/capita US \$ 390
Major Cities:	Cairo, Alexandria, Tanta, Assiout
Production:	Industry 30%, growth rate 7.2% Agriculture 29% Services 41%

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NATIONAL CONTEXT

Geography

Egypt is located in the northeastern corner of Africa. It is bounded to the north by the Mediterranean Sea, to the east by the Red Sea and Palestine, to the south by Sudan, and to the west by Libya.

Egypt has a total area of 1,002,000 square kilometers, of which the Sinai Peninsula accounts for 61,000. Only 4% of the land in the nation is arable. The rest is desert. There are five major geographic regions: the Nile Delta, Egypt's richest agricultural land; the Nile Valley, a long, thin ribbon of fertile land between the two desert areas; the Western Desert, a part of the great Sahara, with a series of oases stretching from Siwa to Kharga, and containing at its southernmost end the New Valley, Egypt's largest land reclamation project; the Eastern Desert, whose highlands along the Red Sea are rich in mineral deposits; and the Sinai Peninsula, a largely undeveloped region with mineral and offshore oil deposits.

The climate is characterized by two seasons: a cool winter from November to April, and a hot summer from May to October. The spring is rendered unpleasant by the Khamsin sandstorms which occur from March to May.

In the coastal regions, temperatures range between a mean maximum of 99°F and a mean minimum of 57°F. In the inland desert areas there are wide daily variations in temperature, from a mean annual maximum of 114°F during the day to a mean minimum of 42°F at night. During the winter, the temperature in the open desert may occasionally drop as low as 32°F at night.

The humidity ordinarily is low. Most rain falls along the coast, but even there, the average annual precipitation is only eight inches. Inland, the rainfall decreases rapidly. It averages just over one inch a year in Cairo.

Historical Background

Egypt's recorded history goes back to 4000 B.C.

Islam came to Egypt in 640 A.D. Starting in the ninth century, Egypt first became semi-autonomous from the Abbasid Caliphate, then the seat of a rival caliphate under the Fatimides (969-1171), and finally the seat of the Abbasid Caliphate when, after the destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols, the surviving heirs sought the protection of Egypt's Mameluke sultans. In 1517, Egypt fell to the Ottomans.

After three centuries of decline, Egypt obtained internal autonomy in the early part of the nineteenth century, and embarked on modernization programs. European influence grew after 1850. The British entered the country in 1882 and formally declared it a protectorate in 1914. Sustained political agitation led to nominal independence in 1923, and finally to total independence in 1954. In 1952, Egypt became a republic.

Administration

Egypt is divided into 26 governorates subdivided into urban municipalities and rural districts. The larger cities are further divided into sub-districts. These different units are administered jointly by appointed executive officers and elected popular councils. Since 1975, the responsibilities of local government authorities have been greatly expanded, particularly in terms of program implementation.

Economy

Until recent times, Egypt was considered the granary of the Mediterranean world. During the nineteenth century, production shifted towards cash crops, in particular cotton for colonial purposes.

Since World War II, limited water resources and rapid population growth have forced Egypt to rely on imports to feed its population. However, agriculture is still the most important sector of the economy, providing employment for over 40% of the active labor force.

Industrialization, which started with textiles in the 1930's, was diversified and expanded within the framework of national development plans since 1960. It currently employs 13% of the labor force. Construction employs 6%; transport, communications, and utilities 6%; trade 11%; and services, including government, 22%.

A significant proportion of the Egyptian labor force is employed overseas, particularly in the Arab countries. Transfers from these workers, revenue from the Suez Canal, tourist expenditures, and oil exports have now become major sources of income for the country.

Demography

Egypt's population has doubled over the last 30 years, from 18.9 million in 1947 to 36.6 million in 1976. In 1980 it was estimated at 42 million. The annual rate of increase in recent years has been about 2.3%. If such a rate persists, the population could reach 60 million by the year 2000.

Since the 1960's, the government has advocated family planning and established a program which met with only partial success. The birth rate fell from 45/1000 in 1960 to 37/1000 in 1980. This helped curb the rate of growth somewhat, but the program still has to gain wider acceptance.

Urbanization

Egypt is undergoing rapid urbanization. Its urban population has nearly tripled over the past three decades, going from 6.3 million in 1947 to 18.9 million in 1980, and it is expected to double again by the year 2000.

Between 1900 and 1970, the per capita arable land area decreased from 0.5 to 0.2 acres as a result of both the expansion of urban centers, all of which are located on agricultural land in Egypt, and the increase of the country's total population.

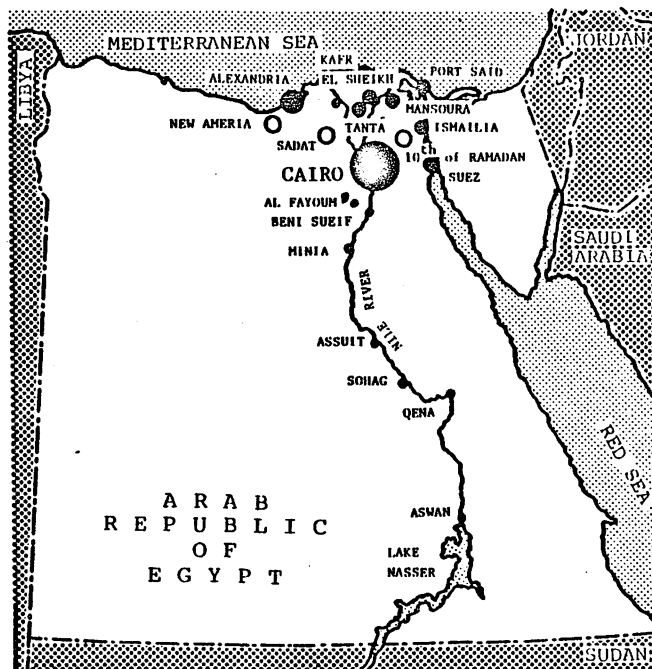
MIGRATION

KEY POPULATION IN THOUSANDS

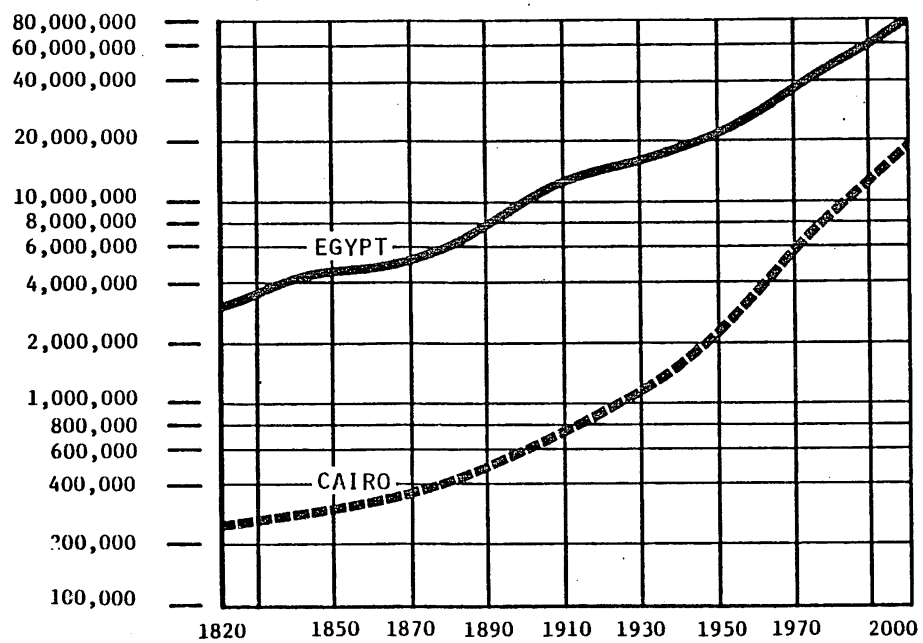
- 8000
- 2318
- 250-500
- 50-250

PROPOSED

- 500-1000



POPULATION GROWTH



horizontal: years vertical: population Source: Abu-Lughod, Cairo.

Employment per acre of cultivated land is the highest in the world, and has reached saturation several decades ago. The constantly increasing rural population cannot find employment in the agricultural sector, with the result that the excess population migrates to urban areas.

To accommodate this influx, the government has embarked on a "new town" policy to channel growth onto desert rather than agricultural land. Three new towns are currently under construction: Sadat, 10th of Ramadan, and El-Ameria. They are intended to house about 1 million persons each. Others are in the planning and design stage. However, this undertaking is both very expensive and totally inadequate to absorb the expected population growth. Therefore, at least in the near future, continued expansion of existing cities is inevitable and should be planned for.

Migration

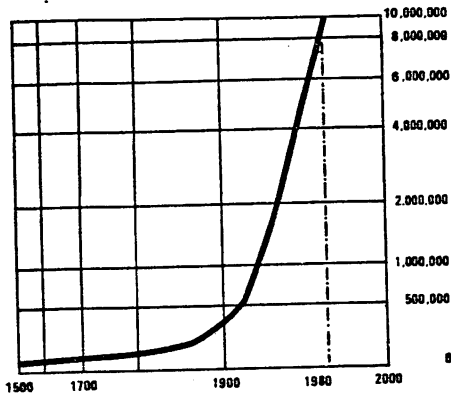
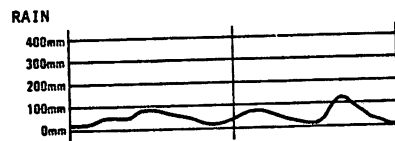
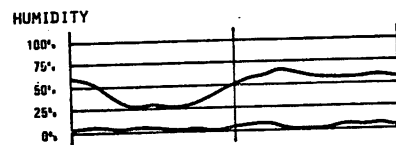
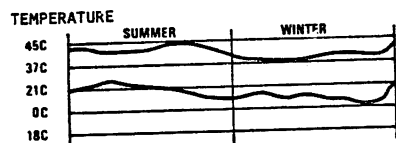
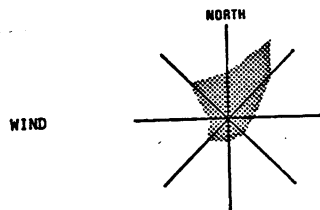
The increase in population, coupled with the scarcity of employment opportunities in rural areas, accounts for an annual influx of about 150,000 migrants to Cairo, which, as the capital city, is seen as being rich in amenities and opportunities, and receives 60% of all rural/urban migration. According to the censuses taken between 1927 and 1960, approximately 34% of the population in Cairo consisted of migrants.

The result is reflected in the uneven distribution of population in Egypt's larger cities. With a population of 8 million in 1976, Greater Cairo housed more than 24% of the total population of the country and 55% of all the urban population. It was followed by Alexandria, with 2.3 million people. All other cities are much smaller, with populations of less than 500,000.

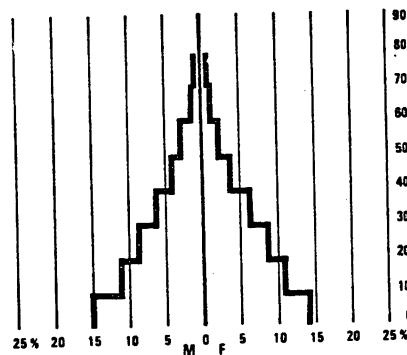
URBAN CONTEXT: CAIRO

Cairo has been the capital of Egypt since it was founded in 641 by the Arab Muslim army. The continuity of this central role for 1300 years has resulted in the concentration of over 50% of the country's political, economic, financial, educational, cultural, and administrative activities in the city.

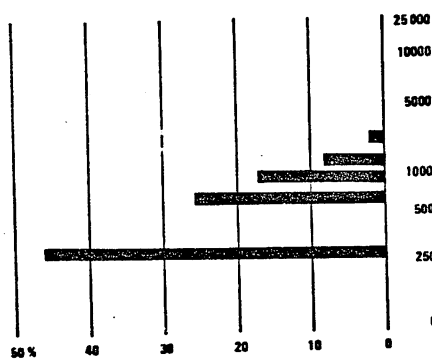
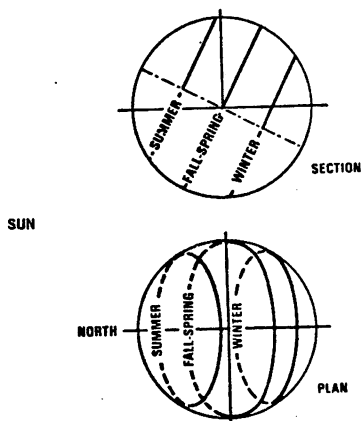
For URBAN CONTEXT: Climate, Population Data



URBAN POPULATION GROWTH
horizontal: dates vertical: population
Source:



URBAN POPULATION DISTRIBUTION
horizontal: percentages vertical: ages
males: M females: F
Source:



URBAN ANNUAL INCOME DISTRIBUTION
horizontal: percentages vertical: dollars
Source:

Although the government called for decentralization of industrial and administrative activities in the early 1960's, the actions of its different agencies often conflicted with this objective, and more concentration occurred.

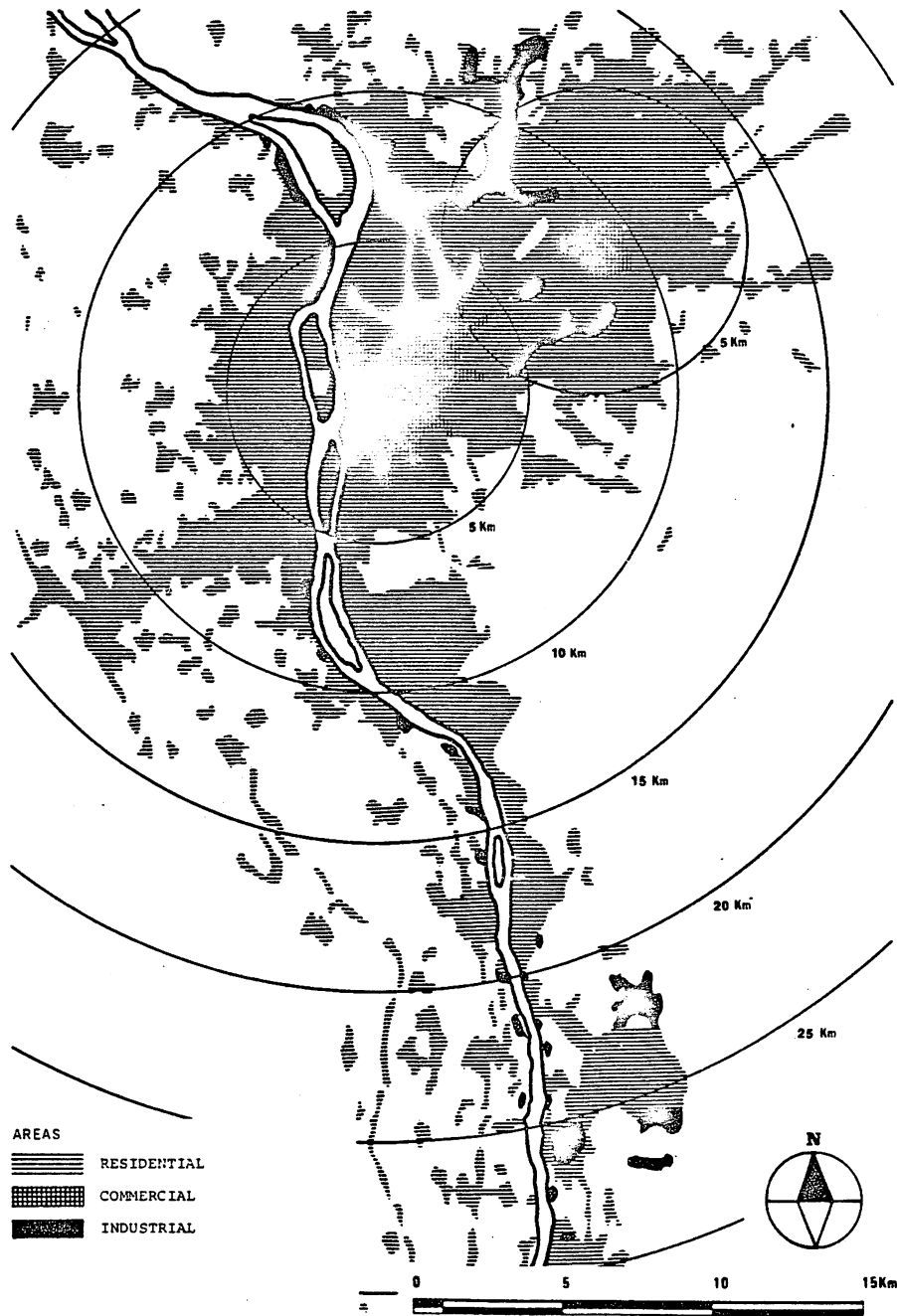
Four satellite cities, Sadat, El-Amal, El-Obour, and 6th of October, are intended to alleviate the pressure on Cairo. Unless they are truly independent settlements, they will merely constitute an expansion of the Greater Cairo area. Should they tend to become dormitory suburbs, this would be in contradiction with the primary purpose for their establishment. Other proposals to promote decentralization include financial and tax incentives to attract entrepreneurs to new cities and smaller towns.

The repercussions of rapid urbanization in Egypt appear primarily in Cairo. The growth rate of Cairo is about 4%. This is a result of both natural growth (2.1%) and migration. The population increased from 0.67 million to 3.3 million between 1907 and 1960. It doubled between 1960 and 1973. In 1976, Greater Cairo housed 8 million, and it is expected to reach 16 million by the year 2000.

Housing

The increase in population of the capital inevitably resulted in a tremendous demand for housing. The private sector supplied most of the new housing until the early 1960's. Subsequently, an increasingly acute housing shortage began to develop as a result of over-regulation and the incapacity of the public sector to meet production targets.

In the late 1950's, rent controls and laws prohibiting eviction diverted investment away from the housing sector. This fear of investment in building was accentuated by the expropriation of assets for redistribution of wealth in the 1960's. Housing construction shifted towards condominiums, introduced to avoid rental laws. Illegal key money charges became widespread as a means of adjusting unrealistic values set by government appraisal committees. With a growing shortage, such practices could only expand to encompass all housing transactions.



URBAN LAND USE PATTERN

1:250000

Since the early 1960's, Cairo witnessed simultaneously an increase in the density of already built-up areas in the city and rapid expansion of the urban area. The overall density in 1947 was two persons per room. In 1972 it reached 3.1 persons per room. This increase resulted from conversions of large houses into tenements and the practice of adding one or more storeys to existing buildings. Thus, young married couples had to live with their parents, and newly-arrived migrants moved in with their relatives for much longer periods than in the past.

Urban Expansion

Urban expansion resulted from construction activity in three different sectors: the public, the private, and the informal sectors.

A number of public housing projects were built by the government for lower income groups. This approach proved excessively costly and failed to provide a sufficient number of dwelling units because of lack of funds, since there was no cost recovery. In addition, the units built were generally modeled on Western prototypes and were ill-suited to the needs and lifestyles of the population they were intended to house.

Satellite cities to be constructed near Cairo are being planned to alleviate pressure on the city and to divert sprawl from taking over valuable agricultural land. These satellites, if they are ever completed, will accommodate only 10% of the projected population increase. Alternatives to traditional approaches (housing projects and new towns) are clearly needed.

Private development caters to the upper-middle and high income groups. New subdivisions were located either on desert land (as in the case of Madinet Nasr and extensions of Heliopolis to the east) or on agricultural land (such as Madinet El Awqaf and El Mohandesseen, to the west). After 1973, a law was issued prohibiting all building activities on agricultural land outside the administrative boundaries of municipalities.

Informal settlements have become a massive problem, as their rate of development makes them almost impossible to control, and their size severely overtaxes the city's infrastructure. They frequently sprawl over adjacent

agricultural land. Between 1973 and 1978, about 76% of all construction around Cairo was built informally on agricultural land.

Official figures stated a housing shortage of 1.5 million units in Egypt in 1975, mostly in Cairo, based on the existing formal housing stock. However, because of the criteria for standard housing in Egypt, the shortage appears greater than it really is. A large percentage of the population is housed in informal settlements, which were not counted in the government survey. Lately, as a result of the proliferation of these settlements, they have been partially recognized and some are being upgraded.