

Modernization from Above: The (re-)Creation of National Identity through Westernization in Mubarak-era Cairo

Authors : Mariam Aref Mahmoud

Abstract : A myth surrounding the development of Cairo bases itself in the Fatimid era when the city, as we know it today, was built. Surrounding the city was a wall meant to protect the main center from any possible attack. The effects of global hierarchies of power extend further than labor regulations and trade statistics. Beyond that, they form dialectical oppositions between local and global identities within urban space. As such, those in power often aim to claim national identity as what they perceive to be the most nationally beneficial strategy. These claims over perceptions of national identity take over the streets, the advertisements, and the parks and eventually make their way into the different forms of media. Often, these claims take over the main planning goals of the city. Whether it is through the control over which sounds are allowed to be produced in public space, what type of people are encouraged to enter which spaces, or other forms of performing local and national identity, public space, property, and land have often been used as a method to present to both the public and the global population what people in power wish for these spaces to represent. In Egypt, these developments have been changing since the end of colonial rule. In particular, this paper will analyze how Hosni Mubarak, and to a certain extent Anwar el-Sadat, enacted neoliberal designs dedicated towards modernization in order to present an image of a Cairo that is not uniquely Egyptian but essentially Western cosmopolitan - a Cairo that belongs to a globalized world.

Keywords : Egypt, imperialism, westernization, housing

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