

**Working Title: The Role of the State in Urban Development- The Case of Urban Water Systems in Cairo**

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There is vast scholarship on the dialectic relationships between state, capital, and classes to explain citizens' everyday lived experiences, and underlying notions of justice, and space-making. Uneven geographical development is an analytical lens employed to understand processes of accumulation and dispossession in the city. A contextual milieu to unravel these processes has been chosen, namely Cairo, Egypt. The city has witnessed two competing axes of urban growth- informal settlements and desert satellite cities. The Egyptian state has long differentiated its infrastructure provision based on geographical locations. Water in particular has long been used as an exclusionary tool from 19th century modernization projects, to recent neoliberal efforts to privatise the commons.

This research seeks to answer some of the questions relating to the Cairene urban waterscape. These include how public service delivery policies are conceived, implemented, maintained and contested; and deciphering water accessibility realities in urban areas. A three-pronged methodological approach was adopted starting 2014. The first focuses on tracing the historical and colonial establishment of water utilities; the second looks at current state structures, policies and official rhetoric on the governance of urban water infrastructure, as well as the role of the donor community. The final axis investigates the impact of water policies on two Cairene case studies- a marginalised informal desert area with prevalent self-help water systems; and gated compounds within a particular suburban elite community. As water shortages and conflicts continue in the region, this project contributes to literature gaps on urban water systems in the Middle East.