

Building from Scratch: Egypt's New Cities, from the Colonial Era to the Present

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New master planned cities are increasingly being built in the world, and are becoming a key approach to economic development and nation-building in the Global South. Egypt has been a particularly active country in constructing new cities from scratch, since antiquity to the present. The British colonial occupation was another energetic period of city-building, which continued decades after Egypt achieved independence. More recently, with the global surge of new city projects and broad forces such as neoliberalism, finance reforms, and the financialization of real estate, the Egyptian state has announced several new city projects, including a lavish new capital to replace Cairo. This thesis compares new city-building in Egypt over three distinct time periods. My study starts during the British colonial occupation, followed by the post-independence era of socialist Arab nationalism, and finishes with the contemporary era of city-centric development. The key findings point to the similarities between contemporary projects and colonial projects, which rely on some of the same key tenets and involve similar power structures.

