

AUDRC Research Note

A review of Egypt's new capital city



Is Egypt's new capital city a desert dream or a disaster?

Background

- The Egyptian government has touted the new Administrative Capital City near Cairo as a flagship for 'Smart City' developments across Africa. The city reflects President Sisi's ambition to develop a 'global' or 'world-class' metropolis that symbolises his modern, globalised, capitalist development dreams to effectively attract international investment and tourism.
- As the Egyptian government aspires towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals, they have served here to develop a normative framework to assess the Phase One design for the city. From this analysis, we determine whether it is likely to achieve these goals and, if not, what the social and environmental impacts of such a development might be for Egypt and the broader region.

Key findings

- Assessment of the Administrative Capital City plan against the UN Sustainable Development Goals framework demonstrates that the designs are unlikely to achieve these environmental and societal goals, despite rhetoric from the government and designers that appear to align with them.
- Indeed, it is likely that the ACC will compound Egypt's water supply issues, conflict with fragile desert environments, be highly vehicular dependent, isolate everyday Carines from Egypt's governance institutions and entrench the power of an autocratic leader.
- Unlike past new city developments in

Egypt, this plan represents a Pharaonic desire for displaying and consolidating the power of an autocratic ruler.

- Egypt's new capital is a problematic model of urban development – from both an environmental and societal perspective – for dealing with Cairo's congestion and poverty issues and for more broadly accommodating Africa's rapidly urbanising population.
- There is a disconnect between the rhetoric and reality of this and other contemporary new city developments that point in some ways to the inadequacy of frameworks such as the UN SDGs for steering global urbanisation.
- Here, designers and design institutions (beyond those commissioned to design these projects) have an opportunity and responsibility to help better define, embed and promote the outcomes of these frameworks concerning urban development and identify where they are being used to obfuscate destructive practices.

Links to related publications

- Bolleter, J., & Cameron, R. (2021). A critical landscape and urban design analysis of Egypt's new Administrative Capital City. *Journal of Landscape Architecture*, 16(1), 8-19. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/18626033.2021.1948183>

Contact

For further information, publications, media and presentation opportunities, please contact Dr Robert Cameron at rob.cameron@uwa.edu.au.