CHAPTER 4

Centralised urban governance in the Greater Cairo City Region: A critical understanding of key challenges and responses

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Introduction

Egypt, like other countries in Africa, has urbanised with an estimated annual rate of 1.68% between 2010–2015 (CIA 2016). With this exponential urban growth, Cairo, the capital of Egypt and one of the most significant cities in Africa and the Middle East, conglomerated with Giza and Qalyubiyah, its neighbouring governorates, to constitute the Greater Cairo City Region (GCCR) in 1977, Egypt's main urban region. The GCCR's three governorates serve as administrative boundaries that aid in the management of the country's largest metropolis but are physically intertwined and function together as one urban core. It contains between 40–50% of Egypt's university spots, hospital beds, public sector and private sector jobs (Sims 2010), 31% of the nation's economic output (GOPP 2012) and almost a quarter of Egypt's population (UN-Habitat 2011). This undisputedly renders it the most significant region in Egypt. It also captures most of the incoming private and public investment and business enterprises, with 83% of all foreign establishments located in Cairo (Sims 2010). Its location – at the centre of a linear settlement pattern along the Nile Valley and the Delta – means that Cairo is well connected to most of Egypt's smaller cities and towns. Today, the GCCR is the best connected and populated urban agglomeration in Egypt with an approximate total population of 22.9 million inhabitants, representing 25% of the total Egyptian population (CAPMAS 2017).

Ineffective urban governance is the primary challenge facing the GCCR, underscoring all attempts to deal with other, more tangible problems, such as the growth of informality as a parallel system for housing, lack of economic opportunities and

inadequate services provision. This chapter posits that such ineffective management of the GCCR is extensively attributable to centrality, resulting in inefficient resource allocation, a lack of coordination and investment in inadequate development projects. Centralisation is synonymous with, but not limited to, population agglomeration, top-down decision-making, and financial and administrative centrality. In this chapter, we use the term in contrast to decentralisation, which instead aims at distributing power among different levels of government and dissolving the concentration of power without jeopardising the sovereignty of the state (Bardhan 2002).

This chapter will explore challenges of urban governance in a context of rapid urban growth, with a focus on centralised governance as a main obstacle to development, through an analysis of the administrative structure of the Greater Cairo City Region (GCCR) in Egypt, and its on-the-ground manifestations as exemplified through three urban intervention case studies that span a range of scales of governance.

First, we discuss policy debates regarding centralised governance in the GCCR and approaches to decentralisation. In this context, we will argue that the city region is ill-defined within the legal frameworks; that both the absence of an administrative body that governs the region as a single unit and the dispersed control over financial resources are inadequate; and that the different conceptualisations of decentralisation at the national level in Egypt exacerbate the problem. Second, we explore three urban projects that highlight the resultant challenges of centrality at different scales of government. To avoid a simplified dichotomy between centralisation and decentralisation as two opposing forms of government, this chapter recognises a spectrum of necessary scales of governance. First, we examine the establishment of desert cities at the national (and most centralised) scale; second, we focus on the Cairo Metro project at the regional (an intermediary) scale, and third, we discuss decentralisation attempts through the lens of a case study at the local (and most decentralised) scale. Altogether, we argue that such centrality in urban governance leads to highly ineffective management of the GCCR, which further complicates the urban challenges increasingly facing the region.

The concluding section highlights the need for administrative solutions that are appropriate to each scale of governance, which, in the present context of the GCCR's administration, necessitates an overarching move towards increased decentralisation. It also connects centralisation and approaches to decentralisation in Egypt to the wider debates on decentralisation as an instrument for development. Rather than advocating a romanticised vision of uncritical decentralisation, which often incorrectly assumes its inherent democracy (Heller 2001), this chapter argues that appropriate scales of government should be carefully pursued towards a cohesive and effective hierarchy of governance.

Urban governance in the case of the GCCR: Centralisation vs decentralisation

Following the Parisian example, developed by Baron Haussmann in the early 1800s, Khedive Isma'il commissioned 'Ali Mubarak Pasha, a French-trained engineer, and reformer, to design a plan for a new Cairo, west of the historical Fatimid Cairo (Rabbat 2011). The new Cairo has come to resemble several cities across Europe that were

Figure 1: Map of Greater Cairo

Source: TCID

rapidly redesigned according to a highly spatially centralised model, ‘the cutting of two new boulevards in the medieval city’s fabric, al-Sikka al-Jadida (the New Street) and Muhammad ‘Ali Street, does indeed indicate an intention to enact a system of spatial control and surveillance’ (Rabbat 2011: 185). The spatial centralisation of the new Cairo has, in many ways, mirrored the intense centralisation of Egypt’s governance structure since the 1800s. This was further accentuated following the Free Officers Movement, in 1952, which overthrew the monarchy and the remains of British colonial rule with the support of a large working class and declared the independence of Egypt. The Egyptian Republic was led by a military government that has since become increasingly authoritarian (Abu-Lughod 1971; Mitchell 2002; Singerman 1995).

The administrative and institutional structure that has developed corresponds to the nature of a regime that primarily seeks ‘regime maintenance’ (Singerman 1995: 12), ultimately resulting in excessive centralisation that hinders democratic decision-making and maintains power at the national executive level without accountability. The resulting difficulties and inefficiencies in urban governance have spurred discussion and attempts towards decentralisation. While there have been several approaches towards such decentralisation since the 1970s (El Hag 2015), most of these have not surpassed the theoretical level. However, after Egypt’s 2011 revolution and the constitution of 2014 the Egyptian President, ‘Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, ordered the government to accelerate decentralisation reforms. Accordingly, a new Administrative Law has been proposed and is currently being reviewed and discussed

by the Egyptian parliament (Abu al-Mahasin 2018). This section investigates specific forms of centralisation, with a focus on the GCCR, suggesting how centralisation limits the overall capacity for effective urban governance. It also sheds light on current decentralisation approaches pursued to address some of these issues, and the limitations of these approaches.

Incongruent definition of the GCCR

Given the process of incremental interwoven urban expansion and layered growth that has resulted in a vibrant and complex urban fabric of the GCCR, its precise definition is difficult. We identify two methods through which to comprehend the city region: either by the Egyptian Planning System (EPS), or the city dynamics.

The EPS is based on the Unified Planning Law (UPL) no. 118/2008, and the Local Administration Law (LAL) no. 43/1979. According to the UPL, there are three levels of physical planning and spatial configurations; national, regional, and local. The General Organisation for Physical Planning (GOPP) prepares strategic physical plans for each of the three spatial levels.¹ On the other hand, the constitution and LAL identify only national and local types of administration. At the same time, Egypt consists of seven economic regions, including (1) the GCCR, which was established according to the Presidential Decree of Egypt no. 495/1977, (2) Alexandria Region, (3) Delta Region, (4) Suez Canal Region, (5) North Upper Egypt Region, (6) South Upper Egypt Region, and (7) Asyut Region; each region consists of a number of governorates. The inefficient management of resources at the regional economic level is partially a result of the lack of local representation.

The other definition of GCCR is based on spatial dynamics. In other words, it is the manifestation of where economic hubs concentrate, the distribution of industries, the connectivity between different urban areas, and the spatial configurations, etc. The complexity of these dynamics within a region such as Cairo is the primary challenge that confronts the various attempts to draw borders for GCCR. This unclearly defined area, which lies somewhere between the Cairo Governorate level and the GCCR, is not only the country's largest urban area but is considered one of the most populous metropolises in the world with approximately 22.9 million inhabitants (CAPMAS 2017). In 2008, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in cooperation with the GOPP conducted a study that suggested a border for GCCR that consisted of an area of 4 367km² and included parts of the north-east governorate, al-Sharqiyya.² Four years later, GOPP released, in cooperation with UN-Habitat, a strategy for urban development within Greater Cairo that outlined another border for GCCR that covers an area of only 3 133km². The border was identified based on three factors: the spatial relations between the different neighbourhoods, a common labour market, and the living conditions (GOPP, UN-Habitat & UNDP 2012). These unclear spatial limits of the GCCR further impede effective governance which is reflected administratively in

1 The GOPP is the planning arm of the Ministry of Housing, Utilities, and Urban Development (MHUD).

2 There was no justification or methodology given in the JICA study for their demarcation of GCCR.

the lack of a political figure or body that is explicitly responsible for coordinating GCCR-wide development. One of the results of such administrative vs spatial discrepancy is the promotion of executive bodies and companies that override the jurisdiction of local authorities to implement city-wide projects across the governorates. A successful example of this is the ongoing Cairo Metro, which was facilitated by the establishment of separate entities to oversee construction and management, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transport rather than the governorates (NAT and the ECMMO). While this was essential for the success of such a project, it highlights the need for a local administration that spans the governorates, else the direct involvement of the central government will continue to be promoted.

Local administrative structures and national-executive influence

The president, the cabinet, the parliament, and the judiciary altogether form the national level of government, with the cabinet itself formed of the prime minister and thirty-four heads of national ministries, who are directly appointed by the Egyptian president. Altogether they manage the state's administrative and financial resources and determine laws to be implemented by the local-level government (Tadamun 2013). At the local level, Egypt is administered by 27 governorates, of which there are two types: urban governorates, and urban/rural governorates. Spatially, each governorate is divided hierarchically into districts in the urban governorates, and *marakiz* (singular *markaz*) in the rural governorates. The smallest spatial divisions in the governorates are *shiyakhata* (singular *shiyakha*) and villages in the urban and rural governorates, respectively.

The GCCR, which comprises three separate governorates, has a particularly extensive local administrative body. The Cairo Governorate is an urban city-governorate – similar to the city-state concept in the federal systems – that extends over 3 084km² (Cairo Governorate 2016). The governorate accommodates approximately 9.6 million inhabitants living on 188km² (CAPMAS 2017). It consists of four zones, each consisting of a number of districts, in addition to four new satellite cities. Giza is an urban/rural governorate that extends over 1 579km² and accommodates approximately 8 million inhabitants, of which 58.6% are living in urban areas (Giza Governorate 2017). The urban parts of the governorate are divided into 8 districts and 79 *shiyakhata*s and 2 satellite cities. Likewise, Qalyubiyah is an urban/rural governorate extending over 1 000km² (CAPMAS 2016); the urban part is administratively divided into two districts and ten *shiyakhata*s (Qalyubiyah Governorate 2016), and accommodates approximately 5.8 million inhabitants, of which 44.7% are living in urban areas.

Despite such extensive institutional infrastructure and spatial subdivision, urban governance remains highly centralised. Administratively, each governorate – whether urban or rural – consists of several entities, of which some members are locally elected, that report to the governor. Each governor is appointed by Presidential Decree and, in turn, appoints the Heads of Districts within his governorate.³ In the special case of Cairo, the governor also designates four deputies at the head of each zone. As such, the entire local administration is inextricably tied to the central government through the state's patrimonial political character.

3 Note that the *shiyakhata* administratively follow the district and do not have separate chiefs.

Dispersed finances

While key figures within local administration are directly influenced by central government, often becoming more concerned with pleasing their superiors (Tadamun 2013), the actual capacity of local government to exercise their powers is severely limited by their control, or lack thereof, of financial resources. The local administration structure (as outlined by the Local Administration Law No. (43/1979)) in Egypt gives full executive authority to governors while limiting their financial authority. For example, there are some entities within each governorate, namely the directorates, that administratively follow the governor but financially follow their corresponding sectoral ministries. It is worth noting also that the national budget is unevenly distributed between national ministries and local governorates, with each receiving 90% and 10% respectively. Even where local administration has the financial authority in theory, in practice, budgets were devised by the central ministries and the executive councils of the local administration, and approved by the Ministry of Finance before being implemented by local administrators (Tadamun 2013).

Moreover, local administration is heavily reliant on central government for revenue, with Article 184 stipulating the responsibility of central government to provide the local administration with resources (Tadamun 2013). While local administrations enjoy the legal capacity to collect and spend local taxes, a report by Tadamun has recently shown this independent revenue to be mostly insignificant, with locally elected officials being reluctant to risk the political disfavour of imposing such taxes, thus 'reinforcing the centralised nature of governance' (Tadamun 2013). These dynamics are made explicit when investigating overall public expenditure which highlights the disproportionate expenditure by central administration (79%) compared to that of local administration (12%) (Tadamun 2013). This financial dependency on central government results in the need for approval of expenditures from the centre which often has priorities that are incongruent with local needs, thus reducing local government to a simple administrative role. This is made worse by the patrimonial character of both central and local government administration, ultimately limiting the capacity for effective and accountable local governance.

While institutional mechanisms that facilitate local governance exist, local administration is far from independent from central government. Its primary actors are appointed through direct patronage from primary political figures, while local budgets are significantly monitored and limited by the priorities of the central government. Local administration lacks the combination of executive and financial authority to facilitate effective local governance. In the specific case of the GCCR, incongruent spatial and administrative delimitations lead to an inadequate definition of responsibilities and cross-governorate coherence that encourages reliance on executive boards and companies for the fulfilment of large-scale urban projects. These executive boards, which often enjoy the administrative and financial support of leading politicians, become crucial to facilitating the execution of complex projects but often render urban development responses to exclusive top-down visions rather than a response to local needs. The following section will detail some of the effects of these manifestations of centralisation on the actual urban development plans and projects, highlighting the crucial limitations of such administrative and financial centrality.

Approaches to decentralisation on the national level

Decentralisation has been high on the political agenda in many countries in Africa, as an integral component to development, throughout the last few decades. According to Laila El Baradei (2015: 3), decentralisation involves 'de-concentration, delegation, devolution, and may encompass privatization as well.'

In Egypt, there have been numerous attempts to reform the Local Administration Law and empower local authorities. The 2014 Constitution took the first legislative step towards addressing this issue by supporting decentralisation in Article 176, which stipulates: 'The state ensures support for administrative, financial, and economic decentralisation. The law organises empowering administrative units in providing, improving, and managing public utilities well, and defines the timeline for transferring powers and budgets to the local administration units.' While this was a positive step towards administrative, fiscal, and economic decentralisation, the LAL did not provide the elements necessary for the execution of full decentralisation and thereby limits the role of local authorities. A study that was conducted by Tadamun in 2015 suggests that the law only gave Local Popular Councils (LPCs) an advisory role while the central government and appointed executive councils maintained a monopoly over decision-making. It is important to note that the LPCs' elections have been suspended since the 2011 revolution and were planned to be resumed by the end of 2018 (Ramadan 2017).

On the other hand, the new Draft Law contains 18 new articles, most of which regulate the relationship between different local-level authorities and the central government, and set the basis for local government capacity building. However, affirming that the enactment of the new law would establish the base for a radical decentralisation of governance is still guesswork. Wunsch (2001: 278) explains that the reasons for delays in applying top-down decentralisation reforms include the wearing down of political will at the local level: 'local governance is discouraged by the absence of real decisions, and local civil service administrators can distribute capital resources, often for their comfort and convenience, and manage their local work lives without disturbance from local demands.' This has over time already diminished the capacity of local government to manage decision-making and financial resources effectively, thus rendering the professional capacities of local government themselves an obstacle.

These attempted legal reforms following and guided by the 2014 Constitution offer an example of the possibilities and challenges of top-down steps towards decentralisation. However, while many studies have shied away from analytically questioning the strategies of decentralisation, Heller (2001) divides approaches to decentralisation into two categories, technocratic/top-down approach, and anarcho-communitarians (ACs)/bottom-up approach. He explains that while the technocratic approach 'produces universally applicable blueprints, and decentralisation-by-design promises smooth implementation' (2001: 137), ACs claim that the technocratic approach reproduces the 'elite-controlled characteristics of post-colonial states' (2001: 135). With the absence of a comprehensive top-down implementation of formal decentralisation, non-governmental and local civic organisations can thus, in this context, play a vital role in supporting community participation and offer models for bottom-up decentralisation, which will be reviewed in the next section.

Exploring centralisation at different scales of governance

Within this complex context of administrative and financial centralisation coupled with various attempts towards decentralisation, this section sheds light on the intricate and nuanced effects of centralisation and its practical limitations on urban governance strategies. It provides a series of case studies exploring on-the-ground urban projects at a cross section of scales of governance, unpacking centralisation (and possible decentralisation) at the national, regional and local scales.

The national scale: Desert cities

Desert city expansions have been at the forefront of Egyptian planning policy since the 1970s and are typically high-profile projects with presidential patronage. Conceived at the national scale of governance and directly implemented, they manifest a highly centralised form of urban governance that has dramatically impacted the urban growth of the GCCR over the last few decades. Despite these projects attracting significant criticism, in 2017 the Egyptian government inaugurated the establishment of yet another new city, the New Administrative Capital, 60km east of the centre of Cairo. The vision of the New Capital aims to overcome the shortcomings of the previous experiences of previous desert cities, claiming to focus on best practices in design, ecology and culture and will have a variety of medium and high-density districts to address the issues of land constraints and population density. The New Capital is also planned to host the many public administrative authorities and business centres which aim to work as a catalyst for creating synergistic job opportunities for the country's youth (Capital City 2015).

This project is the most recent in a longstanding tradition of urban desert expansions as a form of city management, which claim that such expansions will result in the movement of populations that would alleviate a variety of pressures within the urban core of the GCCR. In his 2014 book, *Egypt's Desert Dreams: Development or Disaster*, David Sims provides an in-depth economic, social and urban management analysis of the desert urban expansions (new cities) policy. Despite the prevalence of this urban strategy, Sims concludes that 'any desert project whose justification is moving large numbers of people out of the [Nile] Valley should be laughed out of the room' (Sims 2014: 292). Similarly, at the Egypt Urban Forum 2015 (EUF), urban researcher Yahia Shawkat highlighted the relative failures of previous desert expansion projects in response to Asim al-Jazzar's summary of the NSUP 2052 vision. Shawkat suggests that 'more effort should be made to identify those who are willing and unwilling to relocate in order to implement projects more effectively [in the proposed plans]' (UN-Habitat 2016: 32).

Nonetheless, while the existing desert cities, some of which are still under construction and others established over 30 years ago, are still not achieving their targeted populations, there is a continued intention to invest in new towns despite heavy criticism from many in the urban planning field that this investment could be part of the problem (Tadamun 2015). This was particularly highlighted at the EUF, where Asim al-Jazzar, chairman of the General Organization for Physical Planning, summarised the key strategy for dealing with population growth: 'The main vision of the 2052 [National Strategic Urban Plan (NSUP)] is to expand beyond current urban areas and effectively double the current

area of inhabited land in the country' (UN-Habitat 2016: 30). It is thus clear that the developmental future of the GCCR remains heavily tied to a vision for the movement of the population away from existing urban cores across the entire country, and the plan includes several expansion projects in other cities.

The persistence of these longstanding urban development strategies, which have proven largely ineffective, are reflective of narrow and linear governance mechanisms that continue to reproduce out-of-touch top-down proposals, without benefitting from the breadth of the national and local institutional network or serving to develop their expertise and capacities. These projects bypass the local administration in the process of their inception, more reflecting the grandiose visions and claims of high-level politicians than a response to studied urban needs and challenges. However, while the adequacy or efficiency of the strategy may be critiqued, the national level of administration through which these projects are proposed and coordinated is appropriate for this scale of urban planning. Through the centralised national-level administration such large-scale urban projects have been feasibly financed and constructed. The specific failures of these desert city projects are particularly revealed at the smaller scales of governance.

When 'new cities' have been implemented within a governorate's spatial jurisdiction, the administrative responsibilities are organised separately from the local government. The seven new satellite cities located within the GCCR, administratively follow the New Urban Community Authority (NUCA) rather than the governorate within which they are located.⁴ A city council is formed to operate and manage each new city and is appointed directly rather than being a representative elected body such as the Local Councils established across the governorates. These New Urban Communities report directly to the Ministry of Housing, a national body, leaving these new cities with no institutional mechanism for local governance, let alone an effective one. According to Law no. 59/1979, when this new city development is completed, its administration would supposedly return to the corresponding governorate. However, until now, such transfer of power is yet to happen. The effects of such absence of municipal government and attention was exemplified in the poor management of and inadequate response to severe flooding that severely impacted the desert city of New Cairo in late April 2018.

Conceived, administered and financed separately to existing local administrative structures, the pattern of desert expansion exemplifies the effects of excessive governmental centralisation on urban development. These projects, instead, are manifestations of top-down visions that are removed from everyday realities, and which correlate closely to the kinds of proposals found in the aforementioned urban vision documents. These case studies illustrate and highlight some of the inefficiencies of centralised government as they relate to city management. The resultant condition is excessive investment in projects and proposals that draw on a limited selection of expertise (of the highest-level politicians) and that bypass the authority and potential local experience of local government. Ultimately, this results in a weakening of local administrations, in both their professional capacity and effectiveness in serving as a channel for bottom-up democratic participation.

4 NUCA is a subsidiary of the Ministry of Housing and is governed according to Law no. 59/1979.

The regional scale: The Cairo Metro Project

In a 1954 report issued by French experts on the future of transport in Egypt, a proposal for a two-line metro was made as well as the recommendation for the unification of separate transport companies into a single national transportation corporation. Over the next two decades, several studies were conducted by a variety of international parties that unanimously emphasised the necessity to implement a metro system, however, the political and economic circumstances of the time delayed action. In 1969, a growing crisis in public transportation led the Council of Ministers, with support from then president Gamal Abdel Nasser, to reignite serious study of the project, despite the post-war conditions. Accordingly, in September 1970, a tender held by the Ministry of Transportation was awarded to the French company, SUFRETO (now SYSTRA), which proceeded with further studies (MOIC 2016). The 1981–1983 GC master plan was the first to substantially incorporate transportation upgrading within the vision of GCCR's comprehensive development and stipulated the intentions to implement the Metro system and Ring Road to 'improve the efficiency of the transport system' (Word Bank 2000).

The Cairo Metro has since become one of GCCR's fastest and most successful methods of mobility within the congested city, with continuously increasing levels of demand. The implementation of the project also successfully spans across the Cairo and Giza governorates, indicating a degree of intra-governorate efficiency and cooperation not common in urban projects in the GCCR. This success is largely a result of the establishment of separate entities to oversee construction and management who are each under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transport rather than the governorates. The National Authority for Tunnels (NAT) was established in 1983 as a governmental agency of the Ministry of Transport to undertake the construction of the Metro system and has since been responsible for other large-scale tunnelling projects. The NAT has also been responsible for conducting the necessary technical and economic research related to the project (NAT 2013).

Such executive regional bodies bypassed an inefficient local administration, and its related limitations, to ensure successful management and implementation across the involved governorates. The project instead relied on an executive form of government stemming from the national and acting on the regional scale. Acting at this regional scale of implementation and coordination, the project was ultimately relatively successful. However, this scale is not integrated within the existing institutional structure but develops as a case-specific solution, highlighting the need for this scale of governance in the GCCR to facilitate projects of this size and complexity. Without the institutionalisation of this scale, which represents a middle ground between the national and local (and the highly centralised and the decentralised), urban projects will continue to fail to coordinate across the GCCR's three governorates or resort to arrangements such as those used in the Cairo Metro project, which are also not without limitations.

A World Bank report (2000) suggests that 'fragmented institutional arrangements' across the transport sector in the GCCR, which is a consistent feature of Cairene administrations, has led to the unclear delineation of responsibilities and reduced overall efficiency. Despite already being a successful and vital element of the GCCR's

public transport network, the Cairo Metro's full potential has not yet been realised due to its slow progress and poor integration with other transport systems; an effect of the many bodies addressing transport infrastructure (World Bank 2000). For the Metro to work effectively as a solution to the GCCR's congestion and transportation ills, a comprehensive approach must be taken that allows all systems to work together, and the progress of the metro project should be assessed in relation to other modes of transport, including surface services such as the public buses of the Cairo Transport Authorities (CTA).

While the administrative arrangement of the Cairo Metro project offered an appropriate scale of governance for the project, resorting to such a partnership between national executive administration and private companies was necessitated as a direct result of the forms of centralisation detailed in section two, ultimately resulting in poor coordination with the wider GCCR transport sector. Rather than representing a successful model for project implementation, the more effective lesson derived from this project is the crucial need for this scale of regional governance across the GCCR. Such regional level governance needs to be integrated within the institutional system, with responsibilities towards and communication with both sides of the administrative hierarchy – the national and the local.

The local scale: Participatory approaches

During the last decade, the United Nations have promoted the compartmentship of state, civil society organisation, and private sector, as an alternative to traditional state-led governance/development. This part highlights examples of bottom-up endeavours that try to make up for the lack of local governance and mechanisms through which the local voice can be heard. Within the context of the GCCR explored throughout this chapter, these endeavours attempt to compensate for shortcomings in the local governance structures. Two pilot public space interventions are examined here as approaches to local integration and decentralisation: a public space and environmental upgrading project in 'Izbit Khayrallah,⁵ an informal urban settlement in Cairo, by the community development organisation Takween in 2016 (Takween 2017) and a pilot public passageway intervention in downtown Cairo by CLUSTER, a platform for urban research, art and design initiatives (Nagati & Stryker 2016).

In 2016, Takween started a pilot public space and environmental upgrading project in 'Izbit Khayrallah with funds from the Embassy of Switzerland in Egypt and the sponsorship of Cairo Governorate. Takween designed the project to help the local community overcome the negative repercussions of the establishment of a regional ring road that connects Egypt's main roads and different governorates. The Ring Road divided 'Izbit Khayrallah into northern and southern areas, excluding the southern community who depended on the northern area to access different services. After conducting needs assessment and documentation of the current situation, interviews, and workshops with different stakeholders, including the local community, a tunnel

5 'Izbit Khayrallah is one of the largest unplanned settlements in Cairo, it falls between four districts: Misr al-Qadima, Dar al-Salam, al-Basatin, and al-Khalifa. For more information, see <https://forgottenneighborhoods.wordpress.com/tag/izbit-khayrallah/>.

connecting the southern and northern areas has been chosen for development. In a similar vein, in 2014, CLUSTER conducted a participatory workshop to redesign and upgrade two public passageways in downtown Cairo – Kodak and Phillips passageways – in cooperation with the Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute (DEDI) and the Center for Culture and Development (CKU). CLUSTER has worked with different stakeholders, including property owners and passersby, according to the DEDI website the project '[...] contributes to larger issues related to public space and emerging questions around participatory planning' (DEDI 2014).

While such bottom-up approaches do reach and impact formal government, they usually have minimal impact on national policies and the overall process of decision-making. Their value lies in their enriching of urban interventions and urban governance strategies with the necessary local bottom-up expertise that limits out-of-touch proposals characteristic of those of central government. Through the repeated implementation of these projects, and the necessary collaboration with local authorities, new governance mechanisms can also begin to take shape, affecting institutional mechanisms from below. For example, the passageway renovation undertaken by CLUSTER in downtown Cairo involved an extensive process of consultation and negotiation between different stakeholders, including passersby, passageway shop renters, the building owners and the local authorities (Nagati & Stryker 2016). The maintenance of the project required the establishment of a 'passageway board' that sought to mediate an agreement for the delegation of maintenance responsibilities between relevant parties, ensuring that the key stakeholders in the space both bear responsibility and are represented in the future management of the semi-public space. This method, which can be viewed as a localised form of urban governance, was then adopted by the local authorities when they renovated other nearby passageways, based on CLUSTER's precedent.⁶

In the politically sensitive conditions of post-revolution Cairo, these projects present alternative options for a move towards decentralisation and local representation in government strategies. While their larger effect on existing centralisation is currently relatively small, these forms of urban intervention practice have become a growing sector within the urban studies and practice field, highlighting a possible way forward towards political reform. Perhaps more pertinently, however, the relative productivity and sustainability of projects conducted in such a manner, when compared to the top-down interventions often pursued through national executive bodies, highlights the need for the efficiency of such a scale of governance for effective urban management and investment. Unlike the regional scale, local administration does exist within the GCCR's institutional structure, but as described in the first section of this chapter, it is ultimately ineffective, lacking the combination of administrative and financial authority to fulfil its role, ultimately affecting its capacity as a channel for citizen needs and voices and government accountability.

6 The most notable example of this is the renovation of al-Alfi Bey passageway in downtown Cairo, not far from the Kodak passageway intervention.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the administrative characteristics of the Egyptian government and their effect on urban and spatial state-led development practices. The highly centralised nature of the public administration system in Egypt is evident in several regards, most notably in the role of local administration on the governorate level. Limited powers are given to governorates and local authorities in the final planning and budget allocation in matters supposedly within their jurisdiction, and city administrations are often mandated with the development of their region but do not always have full control over the allocation and prioritisation of their financial resources. This leaves the governor, the perceived ultimate authority to the public, burdened by administrative duties and public expectations to address problems in their governorate but they do not have control of their budget.

For a public entity to be effective it needs administrative representation with a clear mandate, decision-making authority, and allocated financial resources. Greater Cairo currently has none of the above, and despite numerous proposals, each area operates within – and is developed by – its own governorate, with little collaboration or coordination between them. Administrative and financial decentralisation in the GCCR are challenges that have yet to be seriously and productively addressed and are found to be an intrinsic hindrance for the region's development. In Egypt, local governments only receive and have experience with relatively small budgets amounting up to 10% of the overall budget, an issue compounded by a general condition of institutional weakness inherent to the state's authoritarian nature, resulting in widespread incompetence throughout all levels of government, that is exaggerated at the local level (Dorman 2007). These are issues that require attention if political decentralisation is to be successfully implemented. The two case studies from TCID and CLUSTER highlight how locally orientated organisations and institutions can play a vital role in offering new models of participation that can add to a more comprehensive bottom-up decentralisation system.

Finally, rather than falling into a simplistic binary of centralisation versus decentralisation, this chapter has argued for a more nuanced understanding of the multiple levels of urban governance, on the national, regional and local scales. The case studies explored within the Greater Cairo City Region offer examples of planning and urban development strategies addressing the three scales and highlighting the particular challenges of excessive centralisation at each. On the one hand, national centralised planning excludes possibilities of local participation, resulting in inefficient urban expenditure and out-of-touch urban interventions and management, thus requiring a form of decentralisation that delegates more decision-making powers to the regional and local scales for specific projects and programmes. Conversely, while small-scale interventions on neighborhood and community scales may provide lessons for direct engagement and bottom-up approaches, they cannot be effectively scaled-up without addressing larger planning considerations, such as traffic, environmental concerns as well as labour and capital flows, which cannot solely be addressed through the local scale of governance. As such, whilst the GCCR requires an overall delegation of administrative and financial authority from the national level, it is also essential that the institutional structure allows for a coordinating governing body across the

three governorates and multiple municipalities within the GCCR. Such a move would represent a middle ground between the predominant trend of centralisation and the calls for decentralisation. Through the discussion of examples of urban planning and development projects at these scales, this chapter thus raises the question of which policies, programmes and projects should be assigned to which level of governance, addressing some strategies on a more centralised scale to safeguard the public good, while delegating necessary local decisions through a matrix of decentralised governmentalities to empower communities and enable genuine participation.

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