

The Plans of Egypt for Population Redistribution: Are They Sustainable?

Tarek Abu-Zekry

Associate Professor
Dept. of Architecture; Faculty of Engineering
Zagazig University, Egypt

Ahmed O. El-Kholei

Associate Professor
Dept. of Architecture, Faculty. of Engineering
Menofia University, Egypt

1 Abstract

Population is a resource. It is discussed according to three aspects: quantity, quality and spatial distribution. This paper addresses the issue of population distribution related to the management of environmental resources in Egypt.

Today developing countries, including Egypt, represent demographically the majority of human kind on Earth. Urbanization of these countries is among the phenomena of the second half of the 20th century, and is expected to continue. Urbanization is a process that entails imbalances. In certain cases these imbalances are beyond acceptable levels where a discontinuity between urban and rural areas occurs, and a sharp discrepancy between a major city and other urban settlements of the same urban system cause distortions in the urban hierarchy. Successive influx of rural-urban migrants intensifies these disparities. They, in turn, put pressure on job markets, and stress strained urban services, such as transportation and other sorts of physical and social infrastructures.

These regional disparities challenge Egypt's quest for sustainable development. The Government has often responded to the problem by increasing the carrying capacities of major cities, particularly Cairo and Alexandria, thus denying other secondary cities and their regions a fair share of investments. These actions often aggravated the situation. Lately the Government attempted to develop new desert communities. The development of new cities has been slow, and to some extent did not achieve the aimed target. The new agricultural communities also face difficulties to attract population outside the narrow Valley and Delta. Today the Government of Egypt has formulated a plan for land uses that aim to redistribute the new comers outside the Valley and Delta by initiating mega-national projects, developing new settlements, and upgrading existing inhabited areas.

For sustainable development to materialize, the planning process requires representing the interests of stakeholders, building partnerships between development partners, and enabling interested parties to assume responsibility and ownership of the planning process from preparation to outcomes. This paper reviews the efforts of planning the redistribution of population, and argues that detailed action plans to be formulated within the strategies of relocating the population need to be based on participatory structures.