

Transformations in Popular Attitude, Customs and Beliefs: A Framework for the Development of Poor Rural Settlements in Egypt

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ABSTRACT

Egypt is not found in the rich districts of Cairo and Alexandria, but in its 1,200 informal settlements, and four thousands villages and their satellites. Egypt cannot afford to let these settlements perish. It will be no more Egypt. The revival of these settlements is possible only if they were no more exploited. The current economic, social and political crisis of Egypt today is the resultant of external and internal factors. The former includes the rules of the world-system that contain several elements, such as dependency on exports and foreign finance, and globalization. The latter includes attempts to build the state at the center and controlling the subordinates through mechanisms for political penetration. These two sets of forces do not function in vacuum. There are functional relationships between them. The most important relationships in society are those of power, which means the ability to get others to do what you want them to do. Power relationships that the ruling elite administer are relationships of domination that allow one person or group to implement new production technologies, patterns of consumption and to reap the benefits of doing so at the cost of whomever.

Good governance is at the crux of sustainable development through its eight elements: participation, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency, inclusiveness, rule of law, responsiveness, and orientation toward consensus on issues and actions. Without good governance, sustainable development cannot be attained. This requires institutional transformations to assure that problems that threaten the sustainable development of Egypt do not continue to exist after interventions to reform markets and regenerate the natural resources. Good governance requires networking and capacities development that result new structures of participation that build partnerships and enables stakeholders to control their destiny and that of their children. In this respect, good governance means changing in attitudes and customs and belief.

Promoting rural-urban synergies is the solution. This is possible through better planning and management through improved communication, information generation and exchange; resource mobilization and efficient use of these resources, and development of stakeholders' capacities. This will require institutionalizing regional environmental planning and management commissions that can initiate rural-urban synergies by serving as a middle planning level between local and national plans. These commissions should be developed along the lines of public-private partnerships as a forum for decision making and monitoring activities toward sustainable urban and regional development.