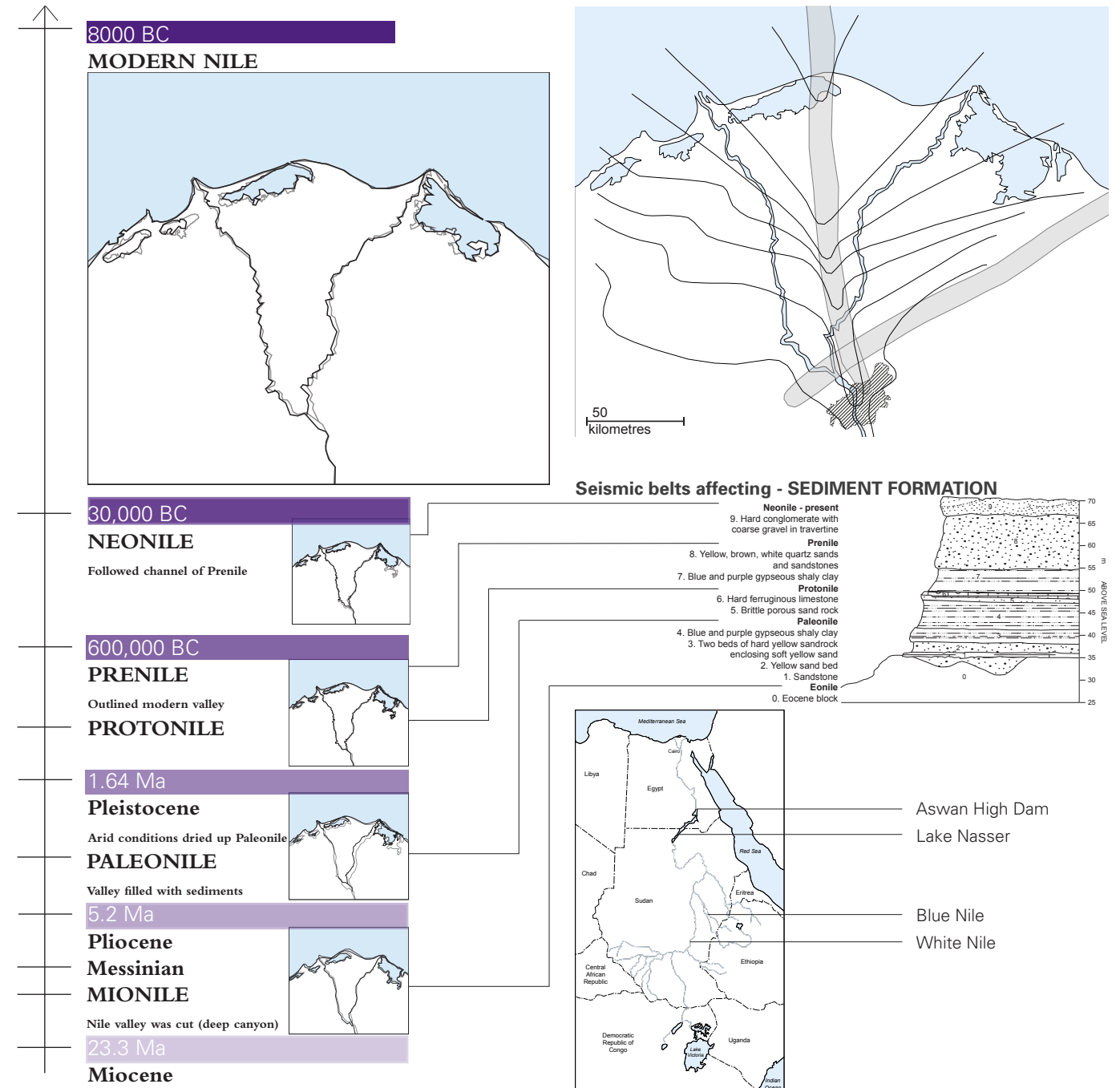


THE ISLANDS OF THE NILE



THE NILE

To analyze the islands of Cairo, it is necessary to start with the Nile. The Nile can be considered the most important reason for civilisation to even begin in the deserts of Egypt. 95% of the Egyptian population settle down on the fertile land by the Nile, which travels 6285km from the Ethiopian and Sudanese highlands to the Mediterranean Sea. Proximity to the fork of the Nile as well as the link joining it to the Suez Canal makes it no surprise that Cairo is the largest city in the Middle East. The changing course of the Nile and its floods also affect the way the islands and the banks of Cairo are developed in response to these changes.



THE ISLANDS

The history of islands of the Nile in Cairo is closely related to the water management in the City itself. The problems of yearly floods asked for inventive solutions and led to the development of a flood control system that has shaped the urban development of Cairo for centuries.

Functions of the water

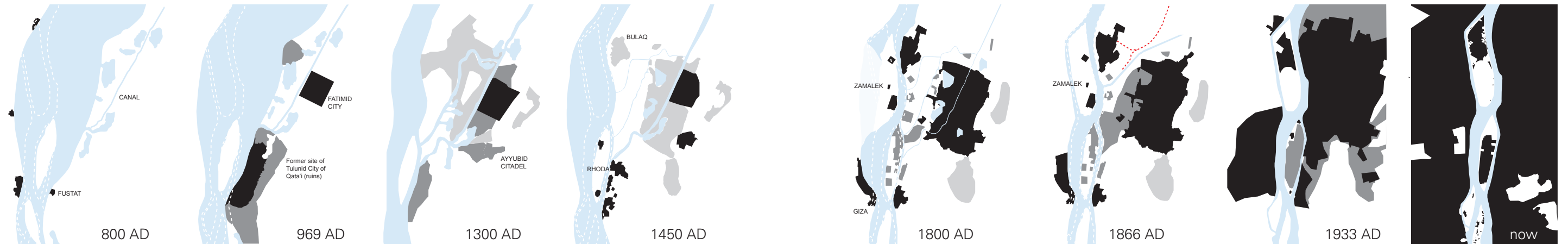
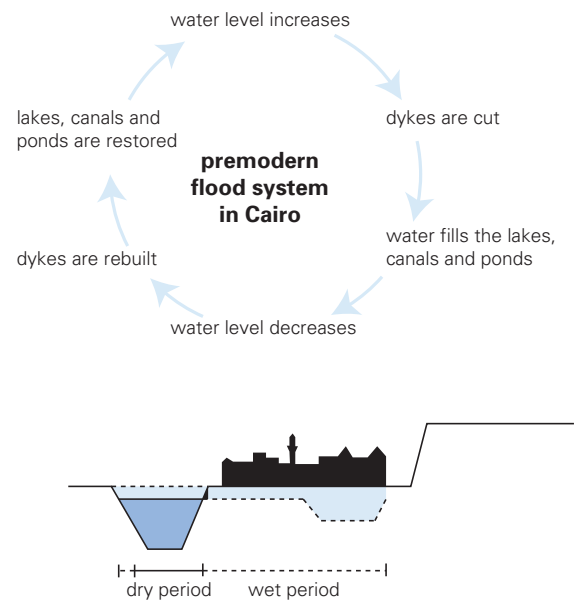
For the Cairenes, the water was a place of social, economic and recreational importance. In the evening, events would take place on the promenades, there was music around and a cool breeze from the water to cool the surroundings (Echols and Nassar, 2006). Travellers from all over the world were impressed with this rich city life, with the prominent people sailing on the lakes on their boats and building palaces near the watersides. In the middle of the crowded city, there was room for relaxing, swimming and social events.

Until 19th century: The flood control system

In the wet periods, water levels would rise and the city which is built on lowland, would be confronted with the danger of floods. To guide the water, networks of channels, lakes and ponds were dug out each year to deal with the fluctuation of the levels of the Nile. The course of this flood system changed yearly, giving Cairo a unique and ever-changing seasonal character.



Entertainment by the shores of birkat al-Fil (Description de l’Egypte, 1809)



19th century: Muhammed Ali

Big changes came with Muhammed Ali in 1805, when a radical Westernization and modernisation was started. His emphasis on improving the hygienic quality of Cairo led to the cleaning out of the city, using resultant excess debris to fill up the lakes, canals and ponds. (Echols and Nassar, 2006).

His example of modernization was followed by his son Ibrahim, who continued in his father's footsteps. By 1866, the Suez Canal was built, Cairo was provided with a railroad, the banks of the Nile were reinforced, Zamalek was made 'flood free' by raising the island and channelling the Blind Nile. Also the major Ismailiyah Canal was finished and opened to traffic (Abu-Lughod, 1965).

20th century: New Towns

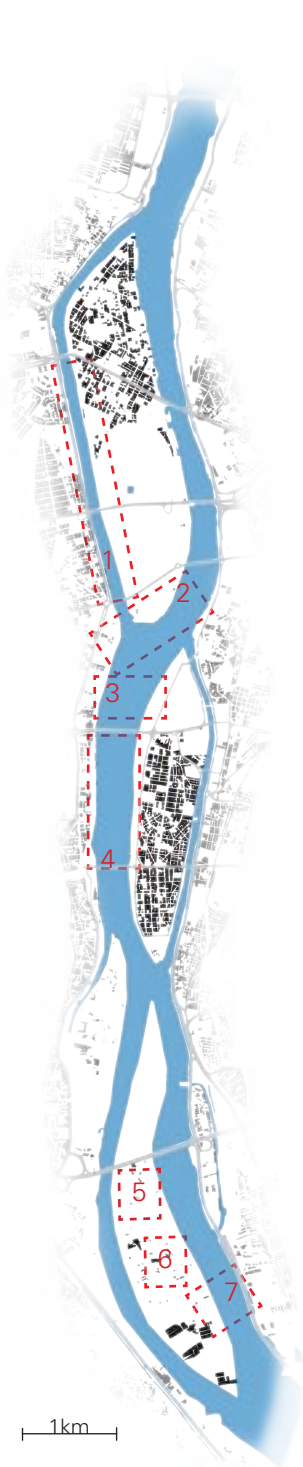
With the New Town plans of 1890-1905, a masterplan for a Nile islands (Zamalek) was made. This masterplan provides high-class residential houses, connecting the island with the surrounding areas. Rhoda has also been planned carefully to serve to the higher class population of Cairo.

The last two centuries, the city has grown explosively because of immigrating farmers looking for jobs in the city and the windfall to the economy with the climbing oil prices. In 2010, over 16 million inhabit the city. The growth of the city is an expansion of the city as well as densifying conditions in the existing structures. On the islands however, this densification doesn't have big impacts like in the informal settlements of the City of the Dead.



New Towns (Google Maps, 10-2010)

CONTEMPORARY USE



1. infrastructure

Zamalek / Gezira

[قريزجلا / كل امزلا]



2. recreation



3. tourism



4. use of the banks

Rhoda

[قريزجلا / كل امزلا]



5. rural life

Dahab

[بهده مرش]



6. agricultural island



7. infrastructure

Living

Housing in Cairo is densely organized around the Nile. The islands form an exception: especially Gezira and Dahab are an oasis of space in the city



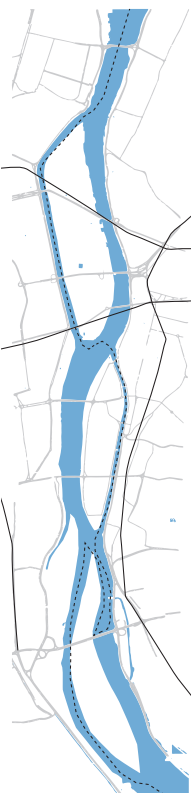
Working

In the area around and on the upper two islands, working and living is organized in the same buildings. On Dahab, working is on the agricultural land surrounding the farms.



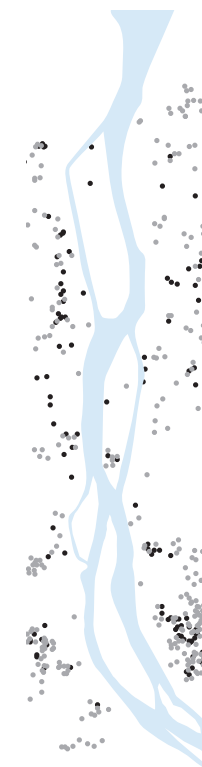
Moving

Zamalek and Roda are easily reached by car and boat. Zamalek is also connected to the metro net. Dahab is only reached by foot and boat.



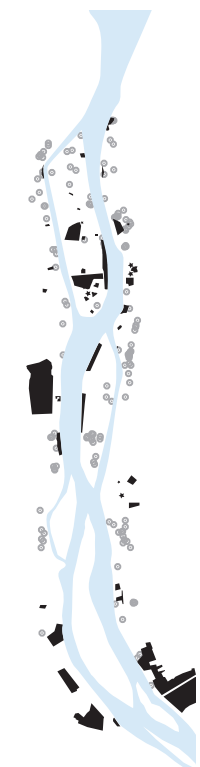
Shopping

Zamalek and Dahab clearly stand out because of the lack of shops.



Learning

- Schools
- Mosques



Recreation

- Parks, sports, museums and the zoo
- Restaurants and bars.

THE ISLANDS IN DETAIL

The islands are in a curious situation in Cairo. Situated in the center, but physically separated by the river, they are both a part of and an oasis away from the city. Each island has their own history of development which has affected their functions in Cairo today. Zamalek has become a place of recreation for the upper class, Rhoda a place for the wealthy to reside, while Dahab remains an agricultural farmland.

Zamalek / Gezirah



1. Gezira Palace / Marriott Hotel Cairo



2. Gezira Club



3. Cairo Tower



4. Cairo Opera House



5. Nileometer



Dahab



Since the 19th century when the masterplan for Zamalek was drawn, both Zamalek and Rhoda islands have been developed accordingly into upper class residential areas. The development of the islands and Cairo were further exacerbated by the opening of the Suez Canal trade route in 1863, which was celebrated by the construction of Khedive Ismail's Gezira Palace on Zamalek (Singerman and Amar, 2006). Today, the islands comprise luxury residences and hotels, the private Gezira Sporting Club, as well as restaurants and shops.

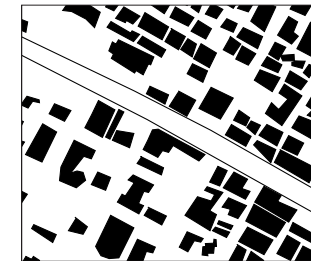
In the rush for urbanization, Dahab's development has been neglected. Currently, the island lacks access to modern facilities like clean water and sanitary services. In a bid to revamp Dahab into a tourist attraction with vast green parks, the Egyptian government has slated Dahab as a "protected area" in 2001. This means all the current residents have to evacuate. Although the families refuse to leave their homes, no official action has yet been taken. (Harris, 2009) At present, the island is an anomaly in the city, a rare stretch of vast agricultural land surrounded by an extremely dense, urbanised Cairo.

Zamalek / Gezirah

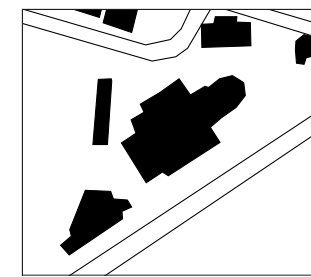
Length: 3.9km x 0.85km
Area: 2.75 km²
Population Density: 50-100 Persons/ha
Characteristics: Nightlife, Restaurants, Luxury Hotels, Upper and Middle Class

History:
 1863 - 79 Under Khedive Ismail, Zamalek was called "Jardin des Plantes" (garden of the plants) Landscape designed by De La Chevalerie
 1866 Construction of original Gezira Palace Island known as Gezirat Boulaq Bulaq and Zamalek made flood-free by embankment reinforcements
 1890 Masterplan for Zamalek
 1940s Northern part of island began to be known as Zamalek
 1970 Mid-section referred to as Gezira Al-Wasta Aswan High Dam completed, making Zamalek inhabitable
 1982 Cairo Marriott opens in restored Gezira Palace

Urban Fabric



15th of May Bridge
 Densely packed buildings along and around the 15th of May Bridge, and on the northern part of the island, arranged in a planned structure



El-Tahrer Bridge
 Buildings around the El-Tahrer Bridge are spaced out, with large stretches of green.



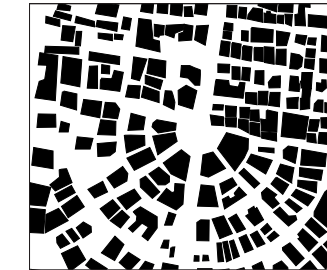
reinforced banks

Rhoda

Length: 3.25km x 0.7km
Area: 1.65 km²
Population Density: 100-250 Persons/ha
Characteristics: Residential, Shops, Recreation

History:
 > 30 BC Part of Heliopolis
 30 BC Fortress to complement Babylon
 > 641 Settlement of the Mamluks
 861 Construction of the Nilometer

Urban Fabric



Central Vehicular Roundabout
 Buildings are very densely packed, and are arranged about a planned structure.



Dahab a.k.a. Gold Island

Length and area: 4.1km x 0.67km, 1.93 km²
Population Density: 250-400 Persons/ha
Characteristics: Agricultural, Access Only by Feluccas

History: Agriculture

Urban Fabric:



Southern Dahab
 The habitation structures are developed over time, without preconceived planning but do cluster around network of paths around the island.



SOURCES

Abaza, Ismail:

„The Nilometer on Rawda (Roda) Island in Cairo“

<http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/nilometerroda.htm>

Abouseif, Doris Behrens:

„Islamic Architecture in Cairo: An Introduction, New edition“

Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1989

Abu-Lughod, Janet:

„Tale of two cities: the origins of Modern Cairo“

From: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 7, No. 4, (Cambridge University Press in Cambridge, 1965) pp. 429-457.

Badawi, Cherine; Betts, Vanessa:

„Footprint Egypt“

Footprint travel guides, 5th edition (februari 2009)

Dunn, Jimmy:

„Rawdah (Roda) Island“

<http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/rawdah.htm> (accessed October 2010)

Dunn, Jimmy:

„Zamalek“

<http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/zamalek.htm> (accessed October 2010)

Echols, Stuart P.; Nassar, Hala F.:

„Canals and lakes of Cairo: influence of traditional water system on the development of urban form“

From: *URBAN DESIGN International*, Vol. 11, (Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2006) pp. 203-212.

Flyvbjerg, Bent, Nils Bruzelius, and Werner

Rothengatter: „Megaprojects and risk: an anatomy of ambition“ (Cambridge University Press in Cambridge, 2003)

Google, Maps and Earth:

<http://maps.google.com>; and Google Earth download software from <http://earth.google.com> (accessed October 2010)

Harris, Maria Cristina, :

„Gazirat al-Dhahab Island, Cairo, Egypt: Inhabitants face expulsion to give way to private development projects under Cairo’s intended urban master plan for 2050“

<http://base.d-p-h.info/en/fiches/dph/fiche-dph-8033.html> (accessed October 2010)

Kelsey Museum:

„The Building of the First Aswan Dam and the Inundation of Lower Nubia“

<http://www.umich.edu/~kelseydb/Exhibits/AncientNubia/PhotoIntro.html> (accessed October 2010)

Rushdi, Said:

„The Geological Evolution of the River Nile“

(Springer-Verlag New York, 1981)

Singerman, Diane; Amar, Paul:

„Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Globalized Middle East: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Middle East“ Amer Univ in Cairo Pr; Illustrated edition (30. June 2006)

Travel Daily News:

„Multi-million-dollar restoration of Gezira Palace at Cairo Marriott Hotel“

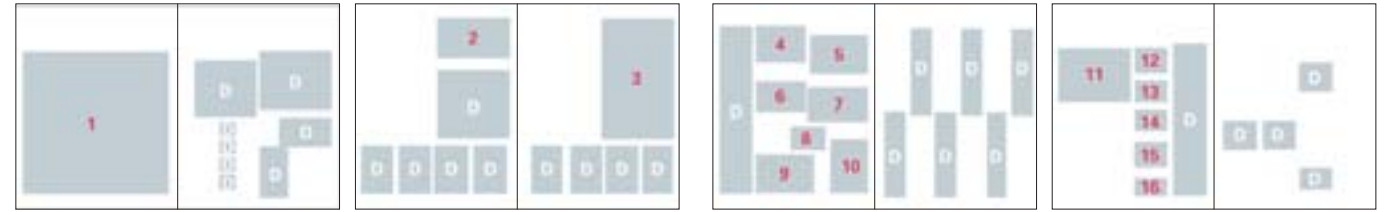
http://www.traveldailynews.com/pages/show_page/36839-Multi-million-dollar-restoration-of-Gezira-Palace-at-Cairo-Marriott-Hotel (accessed October 2010)

University of Technology Dallas:

„Introduction to the Nile“

<http://www.utdallas.edu/geosciences/remsens/Nile/geology.html> (accessed October 2010)

IMAGE CREDITS



Img. 1: „Kairo.jpg“

2006, photo

<http://media-cdn.tripadvisor.com/media/photo-s/01/79/a3/1f/kairo.jpg>

Img. 2: Rucil-Malmaison „Description de L’Egypte“ 1809, Plate

Vol.1, Pl. 39, Paris 1818–28

Img. 3: Google Maps „Cairo“

2010, Photomerged screenshots

edited on 01.10.2010

Img. 4 and 5: „Gezira island Galeaa bridge“ and „View from Sheraton Cairo“

2006, Joanne photostream

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/40766703@N00/273936584/>

Img. 6: „Grand Hyatt Cairo Rhoda“

2006, egyptiandaffodil photostream

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/9684024@N06/2571916457/>

Img. 7,8, 9 and 10: „Misty at the Nile“, „Rural Life“, „Agriculture“ and „I’m Egyptian“

2008, Andrew A. Shenouda photostream

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/2007828/sets/72157602121615602/>

Img. 11: Trivago „Marriott Hotel“

2008, photo

http://imgpe.trivago.com/uploadimages/47/88/4788069_l.jpeg

Img. 12: Into Egypt „Gezira Club“

2006, photo

<http://www.in2egypt.com/assets/images/gezira4.jpg>
in2egypt

Img. 13: Andrea Kamal „Cairo Tower“

2009, photo

http://farm3.static.flickr.com/2644/3724002518_cd87242124.jpg

Img. 14: New World Encyclopedia „Cairo Opera House“

2007, photo

http://static.newworldencyclopedia.org/thumb/e/ed/Cairo_Opera_House_ByDay.jpg/240px-Cairo_Opera_House_ByDay.jpg

Img. 15: Bashar Tabbah „Nileometer“

2008, photograph

http://www.jocr8.com/user_uploads/177/image/medium/1771225926686_IMG_2799.jpg

Img. 16: Harris, Maria C „Dahab“

2009, photograph

http://www.d-p-h.info/images/photos/8033_egypt1.jpg

D: diagrams

Yong, Xin Miao; Winsen, van, Evelien:

2010, vector diagrams and schwarzplan