

Vacant Areas Management and Its Role in the Development of Egyptian Cities (A case study of the city of Qoutour)

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Abstract

Many Egyptians prefer to live in cities, as they consider urban places convenient for living, studying, working, recreating, and maintaining health care. As a result, urban growth is on the rise. Here arises a real problem in providing land for various activities necessary for the required services. The sustainable development strategy for Egypt 2030 has adopted stopping the encroachment on agricultural lands, and since many Egyptian cities do not have a desert expanse to which they expand, it is imperative to revisit and redraw the policies related to vacant areas. This is because they are the main resource for providing activities and services now and in the future, according to their sizes, ownership, and characteristics. The percentage of vacant areas is 17% of the percentage of land usage in Egyptian cities, according to the city databases the researcher conducted in (20) cities. This indicates the existence of great opportunities to enable development. The research aims to study the possibility of efficiently managing vacant areas, by analyzing the challenges and exploring the best utilization of these areas as one of the most important resources to confront unplanned growth and fast-paced urbanism. Identify the scientific theories and international experiences regarding the challenges and the best practices in this respect. Discuss the dimensions of the land management systems in Egypt, by evaluating the strategic plan of Qotour city (2011-2021) through the proposed both implemented and unimplemented projects in 2021 on the vacant areas. Finally, the research ends with a set of recommendations that would encapsulate integrated strategies for the management of vacant areas, which include: Solving the problem of multiple authorities having the discretion and ownership of the vacant areas (institutional framework); Selecting the necessary laws to raise its efficiency (legislative framework); Benefiting from the technological systems in registering and updating its data (technological framework).

Keywords: Vacant areas Management- legislation of vacant areas - Registration systems of vacant areas - Performance of vacant areas.

I. INTRODUCTION

In network intrusion detection system (NIDS) research, there are three types of detection approaches misused or signature-

land is one of the most important non-renewable natural resources. If managed well, it will help sustainable development, and economic growth and will protect the natural environment [1]. The problem of providing the necessary vacant areas for public services, and utilities and the settlement of multiple activities is one of the urgent issues facing decision-makers in Egypt. The management of the vacant areas system is concerning the state's role and responsibilities towards providing the basic needs for citizens in terms of services, public utilities, and housing projects.

It is on these grounds that the research paper begins with the definition of the different dimensions of the concept of managing the vacant areas. Then, it analyzes problems and reform systems of vacant areas management in several countries around the world as well as analyzing the current situation in Egypt. The study concludes with recommendations on the management of the vacant areas to enable development in Egyptian cities [2].

1.1. The main factors for reforming the vacant areas management system:

1.1.1. The conceptualization of vacant areas:

Urban Conceptualization: These are the lands that are included in a specific area plan where significant changes are expected and are usually within the framework of strategic plans [3].

Economical Conceptualization: It is a proposed urban specific area for the development of projects on it, and the size of development may range from a small group of plots of land to an entire urban community [4].

Legal Conceptualization: Separate urban maps showing how individual plots are used also include the identification of both legal rights of landowners, which the state may also be in addition to a particular condition relating to the use and development of land [3].

1.2. Classifications of vacant areas inside cities:

Cities across Egypt contain different types of vacant areas that can serve as integrated urban infrastructure systems in short- and long-term city plans. Field studies of 20 Egyptian cities and aerial image analysis are conducted to identify and classify

vacant areas, according to their ownership, shape, and size, as in (Figure 1 and Table 1) [5].

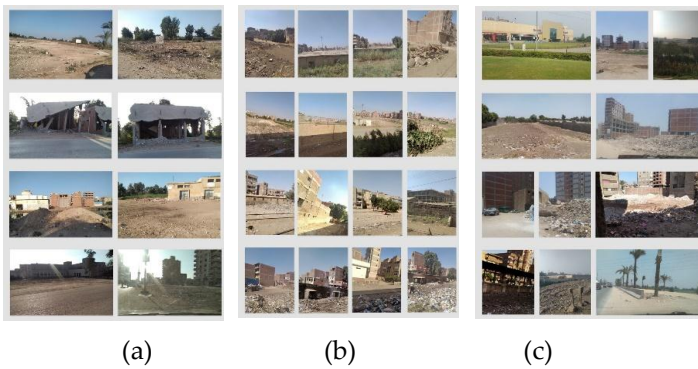


Figure 1. Classifications of vacant areas according to ownership (a), shape (b), and size (c).

1.3. The Status quo of vacant areas in Egyptian cities:

Vacant areas constitute a rare resource and one of the most important tools for urban development, as they offer the path to meet the citizen's needs and ambitions. The government during the years (2015-2018) has allowed citizens to return the illegally seized vacant areas in Egyptian cities, following the Presidential decree No: (75) 2016 [6]. An official committee to recover state land has been formed and it has received a total of 90,000 applications for legalization, and 45,000 legalization applications submitted as of February 2022 in all governorates of Egypt. This has contributed to the presence of large areas sitting on thousands of acres that will contribute to the development of Egyptian cities if they can optimally be exploited.

On the other hand, if optimal use of vacant areas is not made, there are many drawbacks as follows: On the economic side, vacant lots reduce the value of neighboring properties due to a lack of services. In Egypt, no law imposes tax revenues on property owners not to exploit those lands. The absence of such a law makes them free of any pressure to think of developing these vacant areas. It also gives them the ability to monopolize lands for long periods to increase their values. On the social side, Vacant lots are targets of sabotage, criminal activities, and environmental damage [7].



Figure 2. vacant areas in Shubra El-Kheima monopolized for along time to increastheirts the value (a), A target for sabotage and criminal activities in Al-Mahalla city (b).

The optimal use of resources such as urban vacant areas plays an important role in enabling urban development in Egyptian cities. According to an analysis conducted by the researchers

on 20 Egyptian cities, he found that vacant areas represent 17% of the total uses. (Table 1) shows the total vacant areas and the number of plots in the selected cities based on the strategic plans prepared for those cities, as shown in (Figure 3). vacant areas distribution and proportions in selected cities [8].

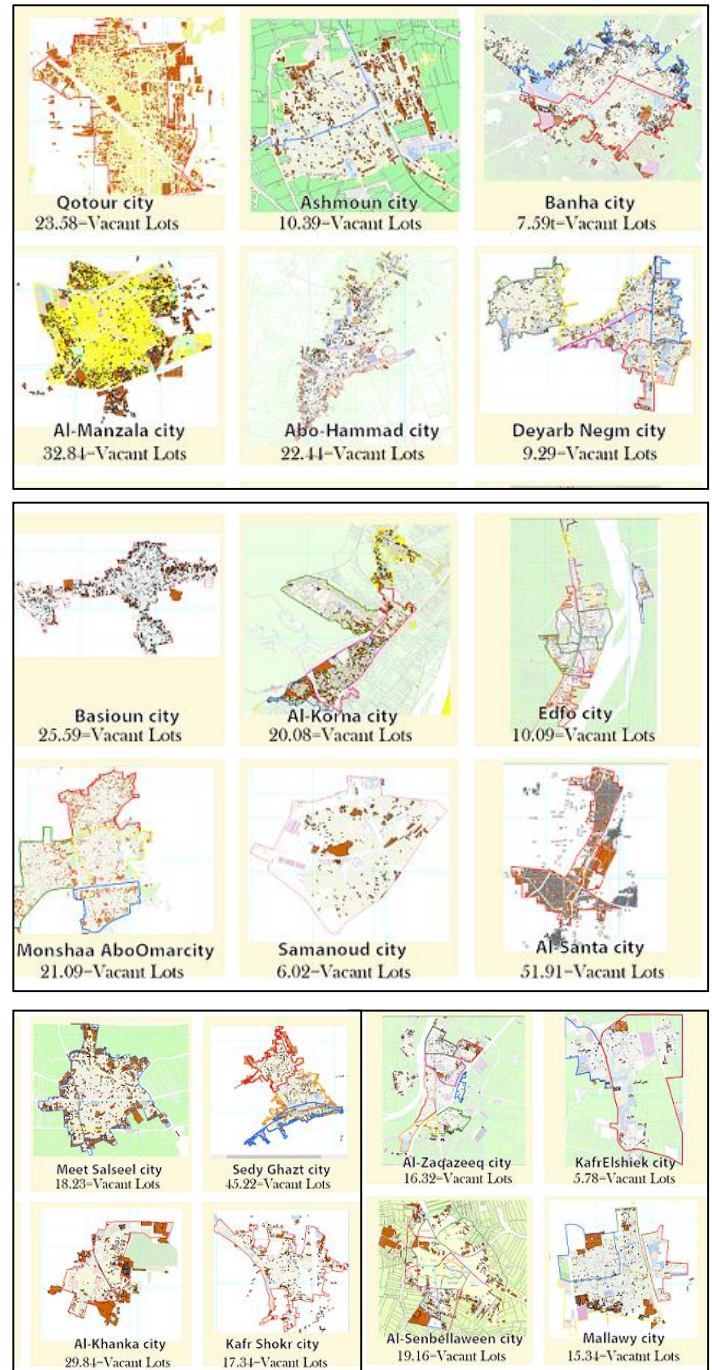


Figure 3. Area of vacant areas and the number of plots in the selected cities and their proportions

Table 1. Shows the total vacant areas and the number of plots in the selected Egyptian cities.

2. Materials and Methods

Many studies have assumed that there is no specific strategy for managing and maximizing the use of vacant areas due to their

diversity in size, ownership, surroundings, and management methods. Therefore, its concept is relatively difficult and the

2.1 International experiments for reform vacant areas management:

City name	District No.	Total area for another uses/acre	Total lots for various uses	Total Vacant lots area/acre	Number of vacant lots	Vacant areas ratios
Kafr Al-Sheikh	2	1308.44	16793	75.64	273	5.78
Zagazig	2	2496.58	7267	407.55	2025	16.32
Banha	10	1721.32	8562	130.59	785	7.59
Ashmon	3	578.066	10870	60.06	621	10.39
Qotour	1	495.54	3661	152.82	1793	23.58
Mallawy	4	623.513	15005	95.64	684	15.34
Singlawin	14	970.357	3560	185.89	477	19.16
Derb Najm	9	454.597	11310	42.23	628	9.29
Abu Hammad	5	208.724	5101	46.83	620	22.44
Al-MAnzala	1	463.761	9789	152.31	1028	32.84
Sidi Ghazi	3	151.956	3343	106.64	471	45.22
Meet Salsil	1	408.229	7613	74.40	703	18.23
Edfo	16	869.38	12892	87.73	734	10.09
Al Qurna	5	697.082	6905	139.95	1012	20.08
Basion	1	488.112	15282	124.89	1647	25.59
Kafr Shukr	1	204.617	3527	35.48	437	17.34
Al-Khanka	1	569.634	1090	169.96	653	29.84
Al-Santa	1	270.363	6004	140.35	1456	51.91
Samnod	1	395.616	12392	23.83	172	6.02
Monshaat Abo-Omar	4	555.633	12123	117.18	1256	21.09
Average Vacant areas area		13931.5	173089	2369.98	17475	17.01

perception of it varies according to who it deals with and the nature of each country.

In the United States of America, for example, vacant areas are identified: as any publicly or privately owned plot or building that remains vacant for two years or more, or is abandoned. Land deliberately abandoned to ensure sufficient space for recreational activities is outside the scope of this research and is not considered vacant, due to the nature of the positive external factors it provides to the community or region.

In the United Kingdom, the United Kingdom Environment Agency listed abandoned vacant areas as one of the environmental indicators, defining it as land damaged by industrial development or other forms of development to be unable to be used usefully, often associated with coal mining or railway areas [9].

Some studies have addressed vacant areas and viewed them as the vacancy of the Earth from any use, whether by occupancy of housing, services, or environmental reclamation. In light of this, many studies concluded that vacant areas are empty land left without deliberate improvement or development within neighborhoods. Numerous studies have argued that it acts as an important barrier to the development of central cities and is one

of the most common uses for solving negative problems within cities [10].

A group of countries was selected to meet the requirements of research: land management was a challenge - it achieved a development breakthrough, and thus improving the management of its territory is one of the most important factors in its success; a transparent and objective land management system.

2.1.1 In Turkey:

Turkey has sought to re-govern its territory to conform to the guidelines set by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Notable examples include the development of Ankara's Gokurambar region:

The study area contains 86 plots, the land includes space on 15 plots, and the map of land use of the area contains functions: commercial housing, residential, urban service area, an area designated as a public institution, and a private socio-cultural establishment

The most prominent challenge facing the region was that vacant areas are retained with high-profit expectations.

Reform system: The application of the VAT approach was chosen to prevent urbanization and increase the revenues of local governments. This approach has contributed to the local government services and self-revenues as well as to the prevention of the city's unsafe and informal development. The tax system included encouraging vacant area owners, whereby: A 25% tax deduction of the value is applied to land under construction.

A 40% tax deduction to vacant areas without construction work, if its development is completed in less than 5 years. A 30% tax deduction to an area that will take more than 5 years, the results were: Increased local government services and self-revenues, and their use in urban services, which in return enhanced the quality of life. Identifying and approving real estate values that constitute a tax assessment and annual value increases that go along with local market conditions. The city's extension to the suburbs, despite the availability of vacant areas in the city center, increases the costs of social and technical infrastructure that local governments cannot afford [11].

2.1.2 In China:

Some of China's most prominent land management challenges were:

According to Chinese law, land, as a resource and as a value, is vested in the state. Therefore, the most prominent challenges were: Land ownership should remain under State authority, in parallel with the highest rate of land development and the highest profit economic return. Creating effective means of protecting land, especially agriculture, from the impact of industry and urbanization.

For this, the government has been quick to adopt a set of laws and regulations to overcome this challenge as follows:

Simple and understandable laws have been enacted to determine the functions of land management authorities, the most prominent of which are the following:

The Law of the People's Republic of China for Land Management: Outlines the regulation of land use and city planning. Protects the rights of individuals to use and develop land and to establish many privileges. Determines who is responsible for the unified administration. Sets the legal and institutional mechanism for deciding disputes over land use rights. Explains the cases justifying the confiscation of land and the official procedures followed. Establishes an independent body to follow up on land development sciences and follow the highest level of management in the country.

City Planning Law of the People's Republic of China: Sets urban planning objectives at all national, regional, and local levels. Requires a master plan and a detailed plan for each level of management. Develops very clear and precise general principles for who is making the plans. Develops controls and components of the master plan (20 years) and detailed plans. Determines planners at all levels of management. People's Assembly Chamber must approve any amendment to the plans made by the Government at this level [12].

2.1.3 In Saudi Arabia:

Some of the most prominent challenges for land management in Saudi Arabia are Imbalance in the spatial distribution of population and activities. the decline in the role of the rural economy. the development of new areas within cities. Unsustainable consumption patterns. Weak city governance.

For this, the government has been quick to adopt a set of key pillars to meet this challenge as follows: Land leasings such as plant projects, poultry, feed factories, services, and facilities. Allocation of land outside the boundaries of development under

the supervision of a particular ministry to the government and service agencies that need it. Fragmentation of large-area land. The results of the first phase since the introduction of the application have resulted in: The total area of white land developed was more than 13.7 million square meters or 3.3 percent of the total area of white land under the system (411.5 billion square meters). These upgraded areas resulted in the provision of more than 22.8 thousand plots of land, i.e., 3.3 percent of the total land that could be provided out of the total area of white land under the same system (about 685.3 thousand plots). The total amount of white land fees on housing projects was spent on housing projects of more than 1.8 billion riyals [13].

2.2 The challenges facing the land management system in Egypt

The area of the Egyptian globe is 6%, covering all forms of encroachment, as this is in response to the needs of many people, where the problem of land takes a center stage in this phenomenon and the most prominent challenge: Lack of minimum level of services in minor Egyptian cities and their concentration in major cities only. Failure to benefit from the most important assets owned by the state for thousands of empty plots of land in Egyptian cities. The current and future challenges facing Egypt (population - poverty - unemployment - regional development) [14]. Benefiting from the technological wealth in modernizing the land management system. Visual pollution. Health risks result from the disposal of solid and liquid waste from nearby neighborhoods. High crime rates due to the vast land that is considered a hideout for criminals. A long-decade monopoly on vacant areas with no taxes levied on the vacant lots of the localities.



Figure 4. Challenges facing the vacant areas management system in Egyptian cities according to using it for waste locations in Kafr El-Sheikh city (a), environmental pollution in Tanta city (b), real estate speculation in Sidi salem city (c), Brownfield lots in Alexandria city (d), Inheritance problems in Al-Mansoura city (e), irregular shapes in Almahalla city (f) [15].

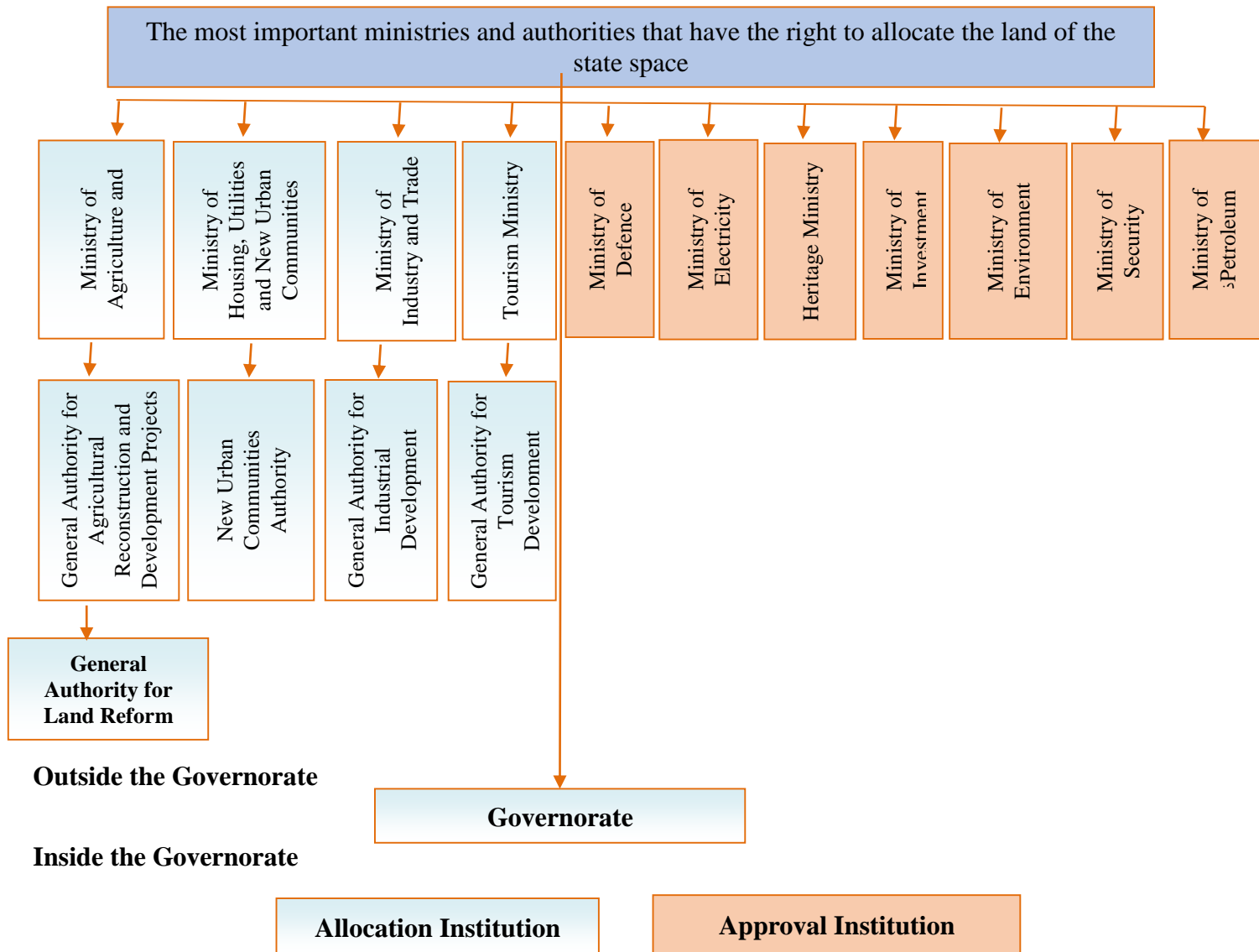


Figure 5. the ministries and authorities that have the right to allocate the land of the state lands.

The institutional framework of vacant areas in Egyptian cities has many downsides, and the most important features of that framework are the fragmentation of the institutional framework and the lack of coordination between the jurisdictions that have power over them. The absence of a comprehensive and binding national plan and limitations to strategic plans, and the experience of Qotour city will be assessed as the extent to which Vacant areas management has enabled the city's development [12].

2.2.2 Challenges to the legislative framework

There are many laws and legislation that have a direct relationship to land, and there are more than 50 legislations between a republican law and a republican decree and a prime minister's decree. Most of these laws and decrees are outdated,

inconsistent, and conflicting developments in land management.

2.2.3 Challenges to the information framework:

Egyptian cities suffer from the lack of an integrated and up-to-date information system on the vacant lots in Egypt and the tools of this deficiency are complex in terms of (registration - updating maps - information available to investors - inventory of vacant lots in the country) and the following is the presentation of the most important of these obstacles:

Registration: Multiple registration systems - high cost - length of duration - difficulty in their procedures.

Maps: Multiple destinations - multiple and updated maps - lack of physical and human resources - deterioration in the ownership registration index.

The information is available to investors: limited information - lack of transparency in allocation and pricing - expropriation mechanisms and compensation evaluation.

Land inventory of space in the State: Information is not available - focusing on the state authority - disputes knowing that it may take 5-15 years to register the plot of land, and the total number of lands registered from 10-15% - the final position of ownership, tenure, and use of such land - land policies are developed in the absence of integrated information on land.

2.3 Efforts to reform the vacant areas system in Egyptian cities:

The formation of the State Land and Entitlements Recovery Commission (Republican Resolution 75 of 2016) which specializes in: Restricting all land that is found to be illegally seized and imported by all legal means. Limiting all debts owed to state-owning entities on the land and classifying debtors. Coordination with the state authorities on the legal and administrative procedures for the recovery of the land [6].

Investment Act No. 72 of 2017: Give investors public and other incentives targeting certain sectors: including numerous tax and customs benefits, simplify the start-up procedures through investor service centers and provide some information on the land available to investors and its areas through the investment map on the ground (Articles 55.67 of the Act plus Article 21 of the Investor Service Centre) and materials (44.59 of the Law's Executive Regulations [16].

Covers land-specific materials: identifying areas of investment, allocation, pricing, and land information available for investments from the stateside.

Unified Planning Bill (approved by the Council of Ministers in December 2017): The law aims to develop a planning system at all levels and addresses the imbalances in the current planning system and enables follow-up, evaluation, and reduced opportunities to waste public money [17].

2.4 Study the impact of vacant areas management on the strategic plan of Qotour city and ways to enable the development of the city:

The Qotour State Study aims to determine the impact of the vacant areas management system in achieving the objectives of the city's strategic plan by assessing the activities and projects carried out on it, identifying the gap between strategic plan proposals and the status quo, challenges facing Vacant areas at the institutional, legislative and information framework level, and making appropriate decisions to improve its performance to ensure that the objectives of the plans are achieved.

The current status of Qotour is 27 km from Tanta, the capital of Al Gharbia province, Bassion 19 km away, and Mahalla al-Kabir 28 km away from Kafr Al-Sheikh. The total population of Qotour center and city in the 2016 population is 338,626, more than 8.28% of whom are concentrated in Qotour, with a population of 28,056. The current urban mass of Qotour is 648.36 acres, which includes some extensions outside the limits of the approved urban space [18].

The vision and mission of Qotour City are to provide its rural environment with services, especially educational, health, administrative, and security services, basic urban services (infrastructure and facilities), and the development of the local economy by increasing the capacity and efficiency of human resources.

Examining the gap between the strategic plan and the proposed activities and projects on space land: the strategic plan project was launched in 2009, the target year 2027, and the strategic plan was adopted on 21/03/2011, with a surface of 482.79 acres with a capacity of 38,423 people and a population of 90 people/acres [19].

Table 2. Proportion of vacant areas between different uses in Qotour 2021.

Use	Area (M2)	Area per acre	Percentage%
Total residential	725334.74	172.7	26.64
Total mixed housing Activities:	125667.65	29.92	4.61
Commercial/Artisan/Industrial	106997.77	25.48	3.93
Total services	213539.47	50.84	7.84
Other:	234812.4	55.91	8.62
Farm/sheds/cemeteries/agricultura			
Roads and spaces	674773.17	160.66	24.78
Vacant Areas	641986.84	152.85	23.58
Total Urban Age 2018	2723112	648.36	100

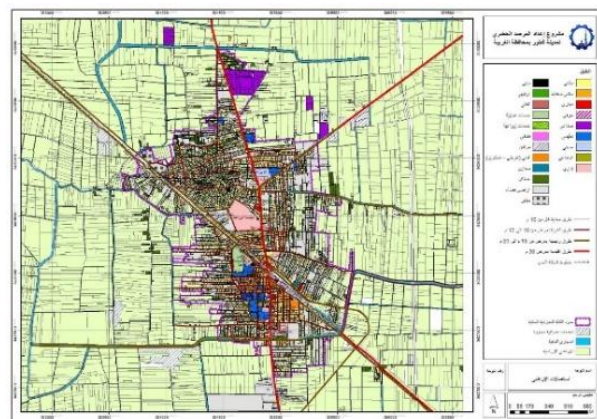


Figure 6. A map of land uses of Qotour City

To assess the performance of the strategic plan and the commitment of executive departments to relevant government agencies as to what has been adopted in the scheme to see whether the impact of the vacant areas studies on planned activities and projects has been studied on the right basis in terms of potential expectations and has absorbed the requirements in all sectors or not, the following is an account and evaluation of housing projects, public services and facilities proposed on the city's vacant lots and analysis:

Table 3. Inventory of projects that have been implemented and projects that have not been implemented on vacant areas

Proposed projects	Position on implementation	Implementation year	Allocation of project sites	Ready to create or infringe on the project
Local economy sector:				
Creating a craft or industrial zone	It's not done.	3 years	Private property and no public property	Not ready for the parents to refuse to do the project.
Project of the Small Industries Development Fund in Qotour City.	It's not done.	2 months	No land allocated	He's not ready, and he needs to allocate the land.
Activating small plastic industries derived from waste recycling	It's not done.	3 years	No land allocated	He's not ready, and he needs to allocate the land.
Activating the jasmine dough industry	It's not done.	3 years	It's not done.	He's not ready, and he needs to allocate the land.
Creating a market outside the residential block (the covered part of Zahar canal)	done	2016-2013	done	The project has been implemented.
The work of an integrated system for collecting, manufacturing, and reusing waste of all kinds	In progress		It's not done.	In progress
Urban services sector:				
Developing the current youth center to accommodate the needs of the city now and in the future	It's not done.	1 year	It's not done.	
Establishment of several primary and preparatory schools to reduce the class density	In progress	2018	done	
Providing medical equipment to raise the performance of the health service at the Central Hospital	It's not done.	1 year	It's not done.	
Closing the deficit in recreational services by exploiting the vacant areas of the state	Done	1 year	done	
Strengthening literacy programmers and providing incentives to those responsible.	It's not done.	3 years	It's not done.	
Activating the role of NGOs.	It's not done.	3 years	It's not done.	
Facilities and infrastructure sector:				
The work of an integrated system for collecting, manufacturing, and reusing waste of all kinds.	done	سنة 2017	done	
Create a traffic unit with a trailer	done	2017-2015	done	
Completion of the construction of Qotour water purification plant	done	-	It's not done.	
Completion of the slope network and full coverage of Qotour city with exchange service.	done	1 year	done	
Raising the capacity of transformers and converting air wires into ground cables.	It's not done.	20years	It's not done.	
Replacement and renovation of existing water system lines.	done	1year	-	-
Construction of 2 ground tanks with a capacity of 3600 m3 to improve the pressures in the network.	done	-	It's not done.	

According to the previous table, the most important results are administrative framework: Confusion and continuing conflict over the management and use of state land among the jurisdictions. A separation between the land use plan, the economic and investment development plans, and the urban development plan. Although the strategic plan was adopted in 2011, the projects were not implemented until late 2015, as

many plots were reactivated as a result of delays in the implementation of projects and activities.

Legislative framework the extent of achieving the state's vision to deal with building violations and enforce building codes 2015:2021.

Table 4. Building Violations in Qotour City

Building violations	2015 :2012		2021 :2015	
	number	Space per acre	number	Space per acre
Building violations on agricultural land where records have been edited	718	13.5	337	7.8
Number of building violations on agricultural land in which a judicial decision was issued to remove	226	4.18	63	2.4
Number of building violations on agricultural land removed	226	4.18	63	2.4
Total number of building violations on agricultural land	718	13.5	337	7.8
Number of constructions works in violation	316	4.28	768	9.5
Total number of constructions works	316	4.28	768	9.5
Total number of illegal construction work removed	95	2.1	230	3.4
Total number of constructions works in violation of which a decision to stop was issued	252	2.18	624	6.1

The previous table shows that: There were a large number of violations building on agricultural land in the initial period of adoption of the scheme after 2012-2015 amounted to about 718 violations on a flat area amounting to 13.5 acres, 2.79% of the area of approved urban age. However, this percentage is lower compared to the second period of 2015-2021, when the number of cases of building violations on agricultural land, which was edited, recorded about 337 cases with a flat 7.8 acres, or 1.6% of the area of the approved urban age. With a change of about - 46.93% less than in the previous period, this percentage, which decreased between the two periods of time means more control over agricultural land and a response from the local administration.

About building violations, there was a major surge in 2011-2015 due to the absence of localities to deter abuse, and the absence of strict laws to encroach on agricultural land or build randomly without permits.

The rate of land encroachment between 2015 and 2018 was halved from the previous 2012-2015.

The lack of electronic registration of vacant areas and therefore the evasion of the people from the implementation of projects with the scheme.

There is no periodic update of maps.

3. Research Findings:

Vacant areas in Egyptian cities, in their current management style, are an urban environment that repels any type of investment in the field of services and real estate development projects, this is for the following reasons: Waste and inefficiency of the usage of Vacant areas optimally. Inadequate provision of infrastructure and public services in Egyptian cities. Relatively small and privately owned vacant plots. Irregular vacant lots appear in the city without a prior plan. Vacant areas are not large enough to be suitable for the completion of approved division projects and the measurement of the performance of strategic plans in the Egyptian cities studied has shown this problem. Does not contribute any role or development benefits to Egyptian cities and does not

integrate with the range in which are located. Leave it undeveloped for long periods of up to 50 years for multiple

purposes, the most important of which is real estate speculation. The investor suffers from fragmentation and a lack of information about vacant lots. The multiplicity of methods of allocation and its different procedures between different jurisdictions. The absence of a specialized committee in land assessment and pricing. Lack of benchmarks for pricing and excessively high land prices. Land-use changes after allocation. The fragmentation of the uses of state land and the absence of thought for comprehensive development. Varying levels of regional development and imbalance in urban development.

To achieve positive results for reforming the vacant areas management system following international and local experiences, the following is required: Taxing vacant areas and placing concessions on development by the rapid construction of the land. A unified vision of a clear policy of integrated land use management for all activities. Integration of land policies with other development policies. A simple and clear institutional framework that achieves governance considerations. Applying the principle of participation in planning the use of state land. Transparency and objectivity in the management and development of land and the existence of a political will for development. Balancing centralization and decentralization. Taking advantage of technological developments in the management and development of state land and the archiving of all vacant lots. Following up and evaluating the uses of state land according to specific performance indicators that are measured periodically. Increasing the supply of developed land to balance supply and demand - protect fair competition, and combat monopolistic practices.

4. Recommendations

To manage vacant areas in Egyptian cities efficiently to enable urban development, the following should be taken into account: Finding a digital scientific method that leads to the arrangement of land in cities according to the priorities of urban development. Creating a program to provide neighborhoods

with networks of public utilities and services within the framework of the actual needs and in a manner that achieves the optimal use of the empty lands in Egyptian cities. Achieving integrated coordination between sectoral agencies to implement various projects on the vacant lands in Egyptian cities according to their sizes and ownerships. Directing urban development and providing urban ages in which services are distributed in a balanced manner. Rationalizing the cost of urban development in terms of the cost of vacant areas for development. Training the technical staff in dealing with vacant areas and their efficient management.

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- [19] Qoutour City Information Center; Assaf Office for engineering consultancy; 2016-2019.