



DMES PUBLIC TALKS

The Rise of the Egyptian Middle Class: Economic Mobility and Public Discontent from Nasser to Sadat

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During the 1970s and early 1980s, Egypt experienced swift economic growth—the result of a regional oil boom. Oddly, this economic growth hardly registered in Egyptian public discourse, which continuously claimed that the country was experiencing multiple economic crises that became social and cultural crises, as well. In my lecture, and based on a recently published book, I investigate this discrepancy. I document the massive socio-economic mobility in Egypt by analysing relevant statistical data and ethnographic evidence, indicating the changes in the employment structure and the spread of mass consumption. I later examine a wide array of cultural resources, such as Egyptian academic writing, the press, the cinema and the literature, in which critics lamented ‘what went wrong’ in Egypt. The narrative suggested here offers a local version of a wider, Middle Eastern and international story—the global formation of middle-class societies, whose members strive for respectable lives with only partial success.

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5.15-6.45pm (tea & biscuits from 5.00pm)

Room 8/9

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