

NIGHT PHOTO OF EGYPT. THE URBAN BASES OF A REVOLUTION?

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I have already shared the fantastic ones here other times [night images](#) that can be found by searching the archives of the [NASA Earth Observatory](#). Yesterday I came across [this one](#). Little more to say that the photo does not say: what they always told us, that the Nile made Egyptian civilization possible, was true. The image also serves to explain the current **urban civilization**, also in **Egypt**, in Africa, the [silent urbanization](#).

I am not going to be the one to make a sensible analysis of what is happening in Egypt and in the rest of the countries these days. It's not my topic. Nor do I want to defend here the idea that riots are the result of urban events. I don't think it's the most relevant thing about what's happening these days. And, if it is, surely [Ed Glaeser](#) explains it better than I do in one of his latest articles ([It's Always the Urban Pot That Boils Over](#)), in which he defends precisely that he tries to relate both ideas:

(...)

Whatever course history will follow, the momentous changes in North Africa remind us that our world is shaped by its cities. The poorer and less democratic parts of the planet have become increasingly urban and that makes change, full of hope and fear, inevitable.

(...)

Cities aren't just places of economic productivity and cultural innovation. For millennia, they have also been the epicenters of dramatic political upheaval.

(...)

Cities are places of revolution, because urban proximity connects organizers of opposition. Large urban populations create the scale needed to initially overwhelm local law enforcement. The physical barriers that occur in cities make it difficult for troops to maneuver and disperse demonstrators.

And the economic importance of cities means that citywide demonstrations can disrupt the economic heart of a nation. Cities also create the social exchanges between soldiers and citizens, such as [the food-sharing](#) between protesters and the military, that can be so fatal for military discipline.

Isolated farms are stable; cities are not. The constant interaction of human energy in dense clusters creates innovations in every area of human life, including politics. Instability is scary, especially for people who already enjoy freedom, peace and prosperity and therefore have much to lose.



Impossible not to match the item; It is evident that most of the revolts and social conflicts throughout modern history have been based on the breeding ground formed in the cities: the encounter of different people with the inherent capacity for agreement and conflict, the manifestation of the inequalities, emigration from the countryside to the city in search of the opportunities that life in the city promises and the corresponding disappointment that it produces in different layers of the population, the gathering of young people who see their demands unsatisfied, etc. The photo shows us an eminently urban country, gathered in cities like Cairo or Alexandria that expect to increase their population by 20% in the next 15 years. The report [State of African Cities 2010 , Governance, Inequalities and Urban Land Market](#), published a few weeks ago by the UN, is perhaps the one that has come closest to anticipating what is now happening. Much more so than the **Wikileaks** cables, which seemed to open the door to all diplomatic knowledge and which, however, have been innocuous in knowing that a revolution was about to take place in North Africa. happen.

Image 1 taken from the [NASA Earth Observatory](#)

Image 2 taken from the report [State of African Cities 2010 , Governance, Inequalities and Urban Land Market](#)

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