Chapter 2

THE EGYPTIAN SETTING

This short chapter provides a brief description of Egypt, its society, population, labor force, and urbanization. The aim is to give essential background information in the light of which the research questions are addressed, and, later, the research results are interpreted. The chapter has four sections. The first describes Egypt in general terms. The second part introduces the fundamental social, economic, and cultural differentials between Upper and Lower Egypt. Further discussion of regional differentials and trends in urbanization is presented in the third section. The final part of the chapter is devoted to a description of trends in the labor force. The chapter is kept deliberately concise in order to provide only essential background information for the study of Egyptian migration, and in order to leave maximum space within the thesis word limit for the presentation, discussion and interpretation of results.

2.1 Egypt: a general description of its geography and population

Egypt occupies the north-eastern corner of Africa, bounded to the north by the Mediterranean, to the east by the Red Sea, Israel and the Palestinian Authority, to the south by the Sudan, and to the west by Libya. The Sinai Peninsula, which is located in the north-eastern corner of Egypt, is part of the Asian continent. Egypt lies between parallels 22 and 32 and meridians 24 and 37. The dominant geographical feature of life in Egypt is the River Nile which flows through the country for 1800 kilometers from south (Upper Egypt) to north (Lower Egypt). The River Nile represents the main source of water necessary for agriculture, and consequently is a major determinant of the spatial distribution of population, agriculture, and economic life in Egypt. Not without reason did Herodotus say that Egypt is the "gift of the Nile" (Beaumont *et al*. 1976: 471).

The history of Egypt is very long, stretching back to at least 5000 BC. By about 3500 BC, the many tribes living in the Nile Valley coalesced into the kingdoms of Upper

Egypt and Lower Egypt. By about 3100 BC, King Menes (Mena) united the kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt. By about 3000 BC, the plow and developed agriculture existed in Egypt. During the next 3000 years, there was a succession of about thirty dynasties. The Guiza pyramids on the outskirts of Cairo, which symbolize the ancient Egyptian civilization, were built in the Fourth Dynasty, lying in the period between 2686 and 2181 BC (SIS, 1999).

From the sixth century BC until 1952 Egypt was ruled by foreign conquerors attracted by the agricultural wealth as well as by the geographic location of the country. Such foreign powers include the Persians, 525–333 BC; Greeks, 333–30 BC; Romans, 30 BC–284 AD; Arabs, 642–1260; Ottoman Caliphate, 1517–1914; French, 1798–1801; and finally the British, 1882–1952 (Osheba, 1988). In 1952, the Egyptian revolution led by Nasser put an end to the British control of Egypt, the colonial exploitation of its resources, and the monarchy, and established a more equitable national government. The Nasser administration implemented fundamental changes, including the introduction of state ownership, land reform, the "Egyptianization" of many assets, and the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company (SIS, 1999).

These development initiatives were, however, fundamentally conditioned by the unique geography of Egypt, in particular its brutal contrast between the densely-settled Nile Valley and Delta regions, and the sparsely inhabited or almost completely uninhabited remainder of the country. Within the valley and delta of the Nile, the physical environment is highly favorable to agriculture of a highly intensive kind. Crops can be grown virtually all year round because of the warmth of the climate, high levels of insulation, constant (though highly rationed) supply of irrigation water, and the high fertility of the river-deposited alluvial soils. Moreover the nature of the valley, enclosed by scarps rising sharply from the valley floor, enables the river to flow without major losses by seepage and evaporation, and in the past has allowed but contained the annual flooding regime which was essential to lay down and create the fertility of the alluvium (Beaumont *et al*., 1976).

The fertility of the Nile Valley contrasts in the most dramatic way imaginable with the aridity of the surrounding deserts, although the abruptness of this contrast becomes less in the north of the country where the delta, defined as a triangle with corners at Cairo,

Alexandria and the Suez Canal, spreads out and where rainfall along the coastal strip attenuates the desert climate. In fact, dry farming is possible all along the northern coast from the Libyan border to northern Sinai. South of this littoral, and away from the Nile Valley, lithosols – soils based on parent rock – are widespread on the vast remainder of the national territory which is desert. Rock outcrops are common, and slopes are often steep. Possibilities for the expansion of agriculture and human settlement were traditionally thought to be very limited beyond a scatter of oases in the western desert – Siwa, Bahariya, Farafra, Dakhla and Kharga – and some lateral extensions to the Upper Nile Valley below Aswan and to the Delta area (for a map of these projects see Beaumont *et al*., 1976: 477). However the discovery of important mineral resources – oil, iron ore, manganese and phosphates – has changed somewhat the economic perception of Egypt's peripheral areas. Recently there has been the growth of tourist settlements along the Red Sea Coast. Other major new development projects – the Toshka scheme, the East Oweinat project, East Port-Said and the Gulf of Suez – are described in Chapter 8 in the context of their role in the overall development of Egypt and possible associated migration patterns. The significance of these, and earlier projects lies in the spatial polarization of the Egyptian population which, although growing rapidly, faces a more or less fixed, or at least very highly constrained, resource of cultivable and habitable land (Esfahani, 1987).

Rapid population growth is considered to be one of the crucial problems which hinders development efforts in Egypt. While the doubling of Egypt's population between 1897 (9.7 million) and 1947 (19 million) took 50 years, the next doubling took less than 30 years, from 1947 to 1976. In 2000 Egypt's population total approaches 65 million. The annual population growth rate increased from 1.5 percent in the beginning of this century to approximately 2.5 percent in early 1960s. During the period 1960–1976, the growth rate slackened but it rose again to 2.8 percent for the period 1976–1986. The annual growth rate then dropped to 2.1 percent for the period 1986–1996 (CAPMAS, 1999). Further fertility falls can be confidently predicted, but because of the persistence of the structural over the behavioral component of fertility (i.e. total fertility rate will fall but the very young age structure of the population gives a high proportion of reproductively-active young adults), population growth momentum will remain substantial for quite some decades yet. Rural–urban variations are also highly significant. Fertility rates are still at a high level in rural areas versus urban areas.

Although considerable progress has been made (more details on this will be presented in Chapter 8, section 8.1.2), the 1995 Egypt Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS) documents areas of continuing concern for the family planning program in Egypt. One is the large variation in fertility and family planning use by type of area and residence. At current fertility levels, a rural woman will have an average of 4.5 children, almost two more than the total fertility rate of a woman living in an urban area (2.7 births per woman). Nearly 60 percent of urban women use family planning compared with less than 40 percent of rural women. Regional differences are also great. Total fertility rates are much higher in Upper Egypt (5.5 births per woman) than in Lower Egypt (3.8 births per woman) or the Urban Governorates (2.5 births per woman). Likewise, family planning use varies from only 31 percent in Upper Egypt to 54 percent in Lower Egypt and 59 percent in the Urban Governorates (National Population Council, 1997). As noted above, the problem of rapid population growth is further complicated by the fact that Egypt's cultivable land is extremely scarce relative to its numbers of people. Over 95 percent of Egypt's 1996 population, estimated at 60 million persons, is crowded onto around 5 percent of the total land area of one million square kilometers: the narrow ribbon of settlement, dense population and agriculture which follows the course of the Nile. The remaining 95 percent of the land area is arid desert. Although it can be seen as a kind of "natural response" to the geography of economic opportunity, migration to large cities has undoubtedly contributed to the further imbalance of Egypt's population distribution.

My concentration in the previous paragraph on fertility rates and behavior reflects partly the demographic research interests of this thesis, as spelt out in the research questions which were introduced in Chapter 1 and which will be further elaborated in the next chapter. However, there are other elements of population change which have to be briefly acknowledged here, including some social and quality-of-life aspects. External migration from and to Egypt plays a minor role in overall national population change. Immigration is negligible and emigration, although well-established, is not quantitatively on a large scale compared with Egypt's large population; moreover, as we shall see later, emigration tends to be selective and not to involve so much the very poorest rural dwellers.

Population increase has been mainly produced by the rapid decline in death rates, rather than by changes in birth rates. Until the fairly recent past, rural health was very poor and death rates due to disease and poor nutrition and health standards were extremely high. The agricultural and settlement regime, with rural people crammed together in small mud-built villages with their animals, exposed to water-borne diseases through the dense network of irrigation channels, constituted a particular feature of the Egyptian rural environment which was conducive to high rates of disease and mortality. Studies of Egyptian rural life carried out in the early and middle decades of the twentieth century (Ammar, 1954; Blackman, 1971 – originally published 1927) portray these problems in all their harsh detail and leave little doubt that "the Egyptian village was one of the most insanitary places in the world to live" (Hance, 1964: 119).

Moreover population pressure can be expressed in various ways. Whilst it is true that Egypt's strong population growth, when set against an inelastic supply of agricultural land, presents a rather pessimistic scenario, this is only part of the story. Within limits the cropped area can be extended both "horizontally" by developing new areas for cultivation (obviously this is expensive in Egypt) and "vertically" by intensifying productivity and increasing the number of crops per year on the existing cultivated area (this too is difficult because of already-high levels of intensity). Furthermore, rural–urban migration relieves at least some of the impetus of rural population growth and pressure on rural land. Data assembled by Beaumont *et al*. (1976: 476) demonstrate that while crude measures (cultivated area divided by total Egyptian population) show a decline of two-thirds in the ratio of cultivated area per capita between 1897 and 1970, a more sophisticated measure (cropped area divided by rural population) shows a decline of only one third (the cropped area is larger than the cultivated area because of multiple cropping, which has been increasing because of agricultural intensification).

In the last forty years or so since independence, Egypt has realized respectable socio-economic progress. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita increased from $237 in 1960 to $338 in 1970, and then to $590 in 1980. By 1995, GDP per capita reached $726 (UNDP, 1998). Life expectancy at birth (e_o) increased from 46.1 years in 1960 to 64.8 in 1995. Infant mortality rates decreased from a very high level in the 1960s (179 per thousand) to 57 in 1996. The illiteracy rate is still high at a level of 39.4 percent, but

it decreases gradually; enrollment rates in schools are increasing. A comparison between Egypt and neighboring countries in Northern Africa with respect to some selected demographic and socio-economic indicators is given in Table 2.1. This comparison sheds some light on the regional similarities and dissimilarities between Egypt and its neighbors. It shows, by and large, that Egypt has demographic and economic profile variables which are quite typical of adjacent countries. The country it most resembles is Morocco; whereas Tunisia, for example, is more advanced in its pathway to economic and demographic development, and Sudan lies some way behind Egypt. A similar picture is given by data and graphs set out in a recent paper by Sutton (1999). Sutton uses somewhat different dates to frame his analysis (1983 and 1996), but the "typical" position of Egypt within the North African realm emerges in exactly the same way as it does in Table 2.1.

2.2 Lower and Upper Egypt

It should firstly be pointed out that, although the history of Egypt as a whole is richly documented, the literature on the regional historical experience of Upper and Lower Egypt is much slimmer. The historical uneven development of Lower and Upper Egypt has led to the former being more developed than the latter. There is a dramatic contrast in the exposure of the two halves of the country to modernization. Observers have commonly noted the disparity between the "thriving population of the Delta [Lower Egypt] and the poverty-stricken population of the south [Upper Egypt]" (Osheba, 1988).

Historically, agriculture has been more developed in Lower than Upper Egypt. Perennial irrigation and year-round cultivation have been common in Lower Egypt since the mid-nineteenth century. In Upper Egypt, on the other hand, agriculture depended on basin, or overflow, irrigation. Due to this pattern, Upper Egyptians were traditionally busy on their land in the late summer and fall but for about half a year they were entirely unoccupied, except for their inter-village feuds (Cleland, 1936). The irrigation system in Upper Egypt has developed gradually, although this development eventually culminated in the construction of the Aswan High Dam in the 1960s.

Table 2.1

Egypt and neighboring countries: demographic, economic, and social indicators

Indicators	Year or period	Egypt	Morocco	Algeria	Tunisia	Libya	Sudan
Demographic indicators							
Population (millions)	1999	67.2	27.9	30.8	9.5	5.5	28.9
Life expectancy	1998	67	68	70	70	71	56
Infant mortality, per 1000	1998	44	45	40	27	26	67
Natural increase (percent)	1980	2.2	1.9	2.4	2.2	2.6	2.1
	1998	1.8	1.8	2.2	1.4	2.4	2.1
Total fertility rate	1980	5.1	5.1	6.4	4.9	7.2	6.4
	1998	3.1	2.8	3.5	2.4	3.5	4.4
Economic indicators							
GNP per capita, US$	1998	1250	1250	1570	2150	6660	290
Average annual growth in	1980–90	5.7	4.4	2.5	4	0.2	1.2
real GDP (percent)	1991–99	3.2	2.5	1.7	4.8	1.3	5.1
Labor force in (percent)							
agriculture	1996	36	30	14	25	8	62
industry	1996	27	40	35	56	34	11
services	1996	37	30	51	19	58	27
Social indicators							
Adult illiteracy (percent)	1998	46	53	39	32	22	45
Percent population with access to safe water	1995	64	59	78	86	90	50

Source: African Development Bank (2000)

The absence of agricultural work opportunities for about half a year in Upper Egypt stimulated a migration stream into Lower Egypt which has been more or less continuous throughout the twentieth century. Large numbers of agricultural workers were recruited from Upper Egypt by labor contractors to work in Lower Egypt, particularly in handling the shipments of crops at seaports, to carry out clearance of the canals, and other forms of heavy work. As noted in the previous chapter, Hassan (1969) estimated the net loss from the south (Upper Egypt) to the north (Lower Egypt) at about one million in the first six decades of the twentieth century, and El-Badry (1965) contends that Aswan, Qena, Souhag and Assiut governorates exported 13 percent of their combined population to other regions in Egypt during those same decades. Such

rural outmigration has continued up to the present day, as my fieldwork will show. The process can be interpreted in various ways. Some of these might include: a natural behavioral response to poverty, unemployment and limited opportunities in southern rural areas; as part and parcel of the time-honored structuring of Egyptian uneven development into its Upper and Lower Egyptian divisions; or as a process manipulated by the state in its need to guarantee cheap labor to build major infrastructural projects. This last interpretation is the thesis of James Toth (1999) whose work will be briefly referred to in the next chapter. The relevance of Toth's political economy approach to rural labor development in Egypt to my own thesis is limited because he is concerned in his empirical investigation with a village in Lower Egypt, and some of the infrastructural projects are in Upper Egypt, notably the Aswan High Dam. Nevertheless parts of his analysis are less tangential to my own work, as when for example he suggests that the accelerated movement of rural laborers to cities in the 1970s and 1980s was related to the oil price boom and the need to fill places vacated by urban workers migrating to jobs in the oil-producing states.

What is much more certain is that Lower Egypt has evolved a larger share of industry than Upper Egypt. This national pattern of industrial location may be attributed, among other things, to the easier access to raw materials, skilled labor, imported machinery, and markets. It appears, therefore, that Lower Egypt has a larger share of the national industrial location (factories, workers, and capital in factories) due to its better position with respect to those factors. It is also the case that Lower Egypt has a somewhat better quality workforce. While the illiteracy rate in Lower Egypt was 39.5 percent in 1996, it was 48.0 percent in Upper Egypt. Upper Egyptians are less educated than Lower Egyptians, with lower levels of formal education at all levels in the educational ladder up to university graduates.

The simple conclusion to be drawn from the above brief review is that Lower Egypt is considerably more developed than Upper Egypt. Lower Egyptians' customs historically varied from those of the Upper Egyptians, being more rural-based in the latter case. Even in modern times, Lower Egypt is much more industrialized, and more influenced by trade and commerce with the rest of the world.

2.3 Regional differentials and trends in urbanization

According to the Egyptian Census definition, "urban" comprises all cities and towns in a governorate (province), together with their constituents of smaller administrative units such as *kisms* (district/county) or *skiakhas* (within the district). On the other hand, "rural" includes all villages with their associated hamlets (CAPMAS, 1999). The spatial distribution of population in Egypt presents a classical example of high metropolitan primacy. According to the 1996 census, 40 percent of the total Egyptian urban population lives in two of the world's oldest cities, namely Greater Cairo and Alexandria.

Table 2.2

Rural–urban population in Egypt, 1976–1996

	Census year		
	1976	1986	1996
Total population	36,636,204	48,205,049	59,312,914
Urban population	16,036,403	21,173,436	25,286,335
Rural population	20,589,801	27,031,613	34,026,579
Urban total %	43.8	43.9	42.6
Rural total %	56.2	56.1	57.4
Urban–rural ratio	0.79	0.78	0.74

Source: calculated from Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics 1976, 1986, and 1996 Census reports (CAPMAS, 1979, 1989, 1999)

The pattern of population growth in Egypt in the last three decades shows an increase in total population from 36.6 million in 1976 to 59.3 million in 1996, i.e. by 62.0 percent. Over the same period the rural population increased by 65.1 percent, from 20.6 million to 34.0 million, i.e. by a slightly higher rate than total population growth. As Table 2.2 shows, the urban population in Egypt fluctuated around 43 percent between 1976 and 1996; rural population at around 57 percent over the same period. The urban/rural ratio decreased very slightly from 0.79 in 1976 to 0.74 in 1996. This fairly constant division between urban and rural population over the 20-year period hides differential population and migration dynamics, the implication being that the strong rural-to-urban migration currents known to exist have the

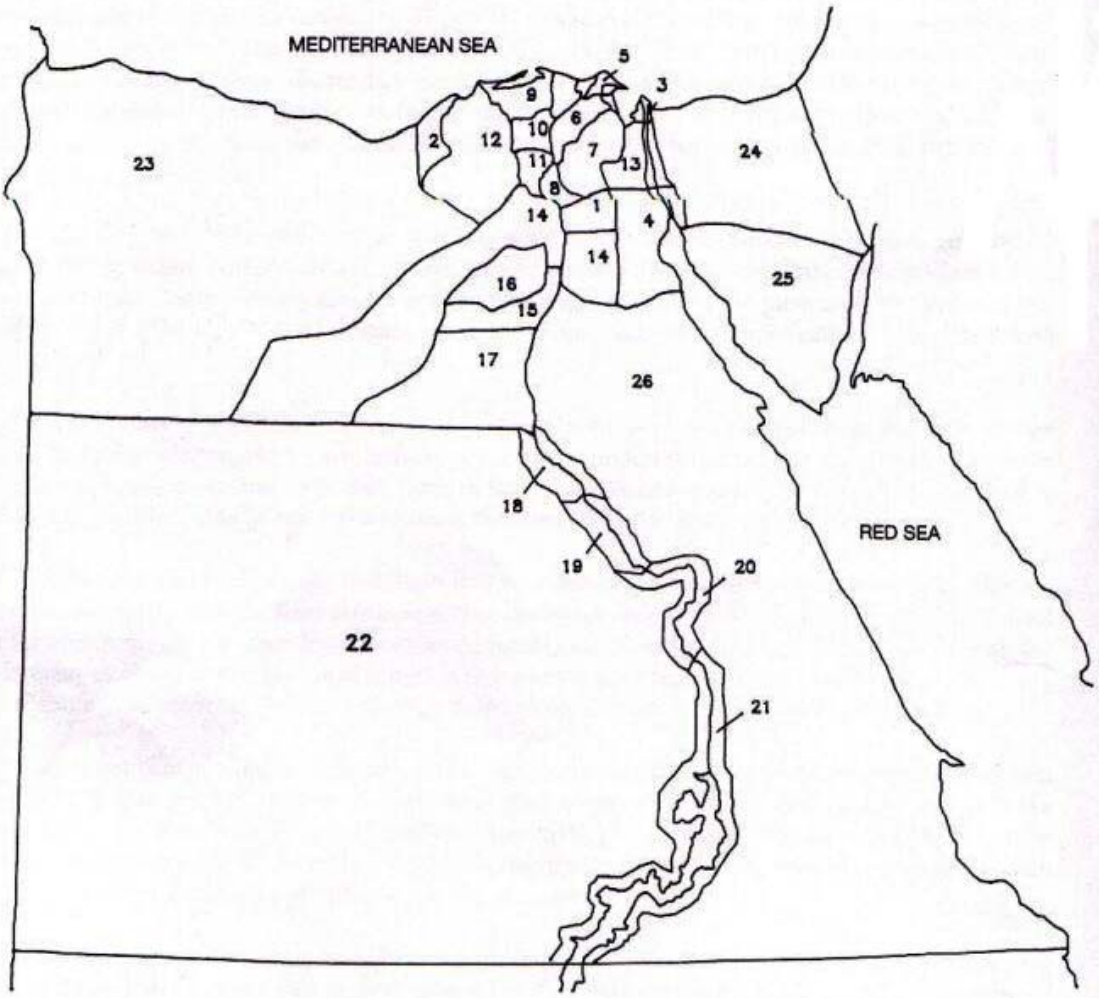
effect of canceling out, to some extent, the higher rates of natural increase in rural areas.

The Egyptian urban population is mainly concentrated in the cities of Cairo and Alexandria, as shown in Table 2.3. The most recent census shows that these two entirely urban governorates absorb two-fifths of the total national urban population. The greatest urban agglomeration is the Greater Cairo Region (GCR), which consists of three governorates, Cairo, Guiza, and Qualyoubyya (Figure 2.1). Greater Cairo is also geographically positioned at the intersection of the three blocks of governorates in Table 2.3: hence the Cairo megalopolis straddles the borders between the Urban Governorates (Cairo itself), Lower Egypt (Qualyoubyya) and Upper Egypt (Guiza). According to 1996 census data, 72.1 percent of the GCR is urban. Cairo's share in the total national urban population has decreased from 31.6 percent in 1976 to 26.9 in 1996. This trend has been compensated by increasing trends of urbanization in the two other governorates of Greater Cairo, Guiza and Qualyoubyya, which have grown as the built-up area of the metropolis has extended inexorably outwards.

Further interesting analysis of the evolution of Cairo is made in the recent paper by Sutton and Fahmi (2001), which includes a detailed discussion on the problems of defining the “true” boundaries, and hence the population trends, of the “mega-city” of Cairo. Yet the hyper-growth of Cairo is clear, although the annual rate of its population growth slowed appreciably during the last intercensal interval (1986–1996: 1.6 percent) compared to the previous one (1976–1986: 2.7 percent). Successive census totals for Cairo are 2.2 million in 1947, 3.8 million in 1960, 5.1 million in 1966, 6.8 million in 1976, 9.3 million in 1986 and 10.2 million in 1996. Publication of the 1996 figure was delayed because the authorities found it hard to accept the lower-than-expected total, suspecting undercounting of people squatting in empty buildings, cemeteries etc. Lowered fertility and a slow-down in the rate of rural–urban migration were acknowledged as more likely reasons, perhaps assisted by a series of Cairo master-plans to contain urban growth. However, the total population of Greater Cairo was estimated in 1996 to be of the order of 13.5 million (Sutton and Fahmi, 2001: 136).

Figure 2.1

Map of Egyptian Governorates



1	Cairo	8	Qualyoubyya	15	Beni-Sueif	22	New Valley
2	Alexandria	9	Kafresheihk	16	Fayoum	23	Matrouh
3	Port-Said	10	Gharbia	17	Menia	24	North Sinai
4	Suez	11	Menoufia	18	Assiut	25	South Sinai
5	Damitta	12	Behera	19	Souhag	26	Red Sea
6	Daquhlyya	13	Ismailia	20	Qena & Luxor		
7	Sharqyya	14	Guiza	21	Aswan		

Table 2.3

Distribution of national and urban population by governorate, Egypt 1976–1996

Governorate	Census Year									
	1976			1986			1996			
	% of urban pop. to total urban population	Rank	% of pop. to total national population	% of urban pop. to total urban population	Rank	% of pop. to total national population	% of urban pop. to total urban population	Rank	% of pop. To total national population	% of urban population to total population in the governorate
Cairo	31.6	1	13.85	28.6	1	12.50	26.9	1	11.47	100
Guiza	8.6	3	6.60	10.0	3	7.68	10.2	3	8.07	54.1
Qualyoubyya	4.2	5	4.59	6.2	4	2.20	5.3	4	5.57	40.6
Alexandria	14.4	2	6.32	13.7	2	6.05	13.2	2	5.63	100
Damitta	0.9	20	1.57	0.8	18	1.54	1.0	21	1.54	27.4
Daquhlyya	6.3	7	7.47	6.3	5	7.24	4.6	5	7.12	27.8
Sharqyya	3.3	8	7.32	3.4	8	7.10	3.8	7	7.22	22.5
Kafresheihk	1.4	14	3.81	1.5	11	0.71	2.0	14	3.75	22.9
Gharbia	4.8	4	6.28	4.4	6	5.91	4.2	6	5.74	31.1
Menoufia	2.1	13	4.67	2.1	12	4.62	2.2	13	4.65	19.9
Behera	4.2	6	6.73	3.4	7	0.70	3.6	8	6.73	22.8
Ismailia	1.0	19	0.97	1.3	17	1.13	1.4	20	1.21	50.3
Port-Said	1.6	16	0.72	1.8	14	0.83	1.9	15	0.80	100
Suez	1.2	18	0.53	1.5	16	0.60	1.7	17	0.70	100
Fayoum	1.7	5	3.12	1.7	15	3.20	1.8	16	3.35	22.5
Beni-Sueif	1.7	15	3.03	1.7	15	2.99	1.7	18	3.13	23.5
Menia	2.7	10	5.61	1.7	15	5.49	2.5	12	5.58	19.4
Assiut	2.9	9	4.63	2.6	9	4.61	3.0	9	4.72	27.3
Souhag	2.5	11	5.25	2.5	10	5.09	2.7	10	5.27	21.7
Qena & Luxor	2.4	12	4.67	2.4	11	4.67	2.7	11	4.73	24.4
Aswan	1.5	17	1.69	1.5	16	1.66	1.6	19	1.64	42.6
Frontier Govs.*	0.8		0.72	1.5		1.17	2.0		1.38	58.7
Total (%)	100		100	100		100	100		100	42.6

Source: Calculated from Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), 1976, 1986, and 1996 Census reports

* Fronteir governorates include Red Sea, New valley, Matrouh, and North and South Sinai governorates.

Table 2.4

Percentage distribution of workers aged 6+, by industry and place of residence, Egypt, 1986–1996

Industrial classification category	Urban			Rural			Total		
	1986	**1996**	**Change**	**1986**	**1996**	**Change**	**1986**	**1996**	**Change**
Agriculture, hunting, fishing and forestry	11.9	7.7	-35.3	65.0	51.6	-20.6	41.8	31.3	-25.1
Mining and quarrying	0.7	0.6	-14.3	0.3	0.2	-33.3	0.5	0.4	-20.0
Manufacturing industries	20.1	19.2	-4.5	6.8	9.5	39.7	13.5	14.0	3.7
Electricity, gas and water	1.1	1.3	18.2	0.5	0.8	60.0	0.8	1.0	25.0
Construction	10.1	10.5	4.0	4.7	6.2	31.9	7.5	8.2	9.3
Trade, restaurants and hotels	12.0	16.3	35.8	3.6	5.5	52.8	7.8	10.5	34.6
Transportation, storage and communication	8.3	8.0	-3.6	3.3	4.1	24.2	5.9	5.9	0.0
Financing, insurance, real estate and business services	3.5	6.4	82.9	0.7	3.0	328.6	2.0	4.5	125.0
Community, social, personal and repair services	32.2	30.0	-6.8	15.1	19.1	26.5	20.2	24.2	19.8
Total % (000's)	100.0 5625	100.0 7313	30.0	100.0 6522	100.0 8455	29.6	100.0 12147	100.0 15768	29.8

Source: Calculated from 1986 and 1996 Census data; CAPMAS 1989, 1999

2.4 Trends in labor force structure

The percentage distribution of the workers by employment sector over the intercensal period 1986–1996 is shown in Table 2.4, which is split into three sets of columns, for urban, rural and total workforce. Three sectors – "mining and quarrying", "electricity,…" and "finance,…" – had a small role in absorbing the workers, with their combined share at the aggregate national level being only 3.0 percent in 1986 and 5.9 in 1996. The increase in "finance" from 2.0 to 4.5 is due to market liberalization strategies and open economic policies. The bulk of the workers are absorbed in four main sectors ranked in the same order in the two censuses, as follows: "agriculture,…", "services,…", "manufacturing" and "trade". However, the relative share of the agricultural sector decreased by one fourth (or by 10 percentage points) from 41.8 percent in 1986 to 31.3 percent in 1996, whilst that of the manufacturing sector increased slightly from 13.5 percent to 14.0 percent across the two census years. Also to be observed is the increase in the relative share of "trade..", which increased from 7.8 percent to 10.5 percent, an increase of more than one third.

In rural areas, the great majority of the workers continued to be still engaged in agricultural activities, although a decreasing trend is evident (the respective share in the two censuses was 65.0 percent and 51.6 percent). All other employment sectors experienced significant increases, ranging between 24.2 percent for the transportation sector and 328.6 percent for the finance sector. Such changes indicate that rural areas were experiencing some economic transformation during the intercensal period. However, it is important to note that the division of urban/rural here refers to the place of residence of workers rather than the place of location of the work activity concerned. And it is also necessary to point out that, with the exception of agriculture, most rural workers perform their work in nearby urban areas, to which they must commute.

With respect to urban areas, the employment structure of the workers looks more balanced than that for the rural areas. The majority of the workers belonged to the services sector in the two census years. The second largest sector was that of the manufacturing activities, although its share has decreased slightly from 20.1 percent in 1986 to 19.2 percent in 1996. The "trade,.." sector ranked third, with a share of 12 percent in 1986. This sector increased in relative importance in 1996 to 16.3 percent.

In addition to the explanation already presented earlier, it may be said that the relative share of workers other than farmers in that sector increased in urban areas.

2.5 Conclusion

This brief chapter has provided essential background data on Egypt as an appropriate context for a study of rural–urban migration. Egypt has been shown to consist of a number of sharp regional dualities: the densely-populated Nile Delta and Valley versus the almost-uninhabited desert on either side (this duality is migrationally unimportant); the urban and the rural; and the more developed (and urbanized) Lower Egypt and the less-developed Upper Egypt. For the purposes of this research the main geographical framework is dualistic contrast between the megalopolis of Greater Cairo, located at the apex of the Nile Delta in Lower Egypt, and the seven governorates which succeed each other in the predominantly rural but densely populated Upper Nile Valley between Beni-Sueif and Aswan (Figure 2.1). In the first part of the next chapter some of the historical and statistical dimensions of this Upper-to-Lower Egypt migration are explored, thereby continuing the regional descriptive analysis presented in this chapter. It will be shown that rural–urban migration is not a merely recent phenomenon which has grown up in response to emerging regional disequilibria in Egypt's post-independence modernization and development process. Rather, it appears to be a more deeply-embedded structural feature of Egypt's historical development over the past one hundred years or more.