Chapter 9

CONCLUSIONS

As I mentioned at the outset of this study, my aim in this thesis has been to analyze in depth one strategy of action that is taken by many young men in rural Egypt to deal with the harsh life and limited opportunities that they face in their villages, namely rural–urban migration. Whether to call this phenomenon rural–urban migration, or something else (to-and-fro movement, circulation, etc.) has been a continuing dilemma throughout this thesis, and this problem is related to the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of migration and mobility set out in Chapter 3. I shall return to re-examine some of these conceptual and definitional points later in this concluding chapter. What is undeniable, however, is that casual migrant labor is widespread in the developing world. Poorly paid and condemned to work in the most marginal jobs under tough exploitative conditions, migrants involved in internal migration are still surprisingly little understood in countries such as Egypt (Toth, 1999). Ibrahim (1982: 2–3) describes internal migration as Egypt's "rural–urban symbiosis", and stresses the lack of scholarly attention addressed to this important yet "silent revolution". My study can therefore be seen as an attempt to fill at least part of this scholarly void, although for reasons of time and manageability my research has been rather narrowly focused on one specific migration stream, that of landless and semi-landless laborers from rural Upper Egypt to Cairo. The primary location of the research has been at the destination, where the main questionnaire and interview surveys were carried out. However, in order not to lose sight of the all-important village setting, and in order to respect the integrity of migration studies which examine both "ends" of the migration process, some fieldwork was also carried out in a cluster of settlements in Souhag governorate, typical "sending villages". Yet conceptualizing the two poles of the migration phenomenon as "sending" and "destination" places raises the question as to the appropriateness of these labels when the pattern of movement is continuous, back and forth, and fluid.

I also pointed out in Chapter 1 that I intended to examine the phenomenon of internal migration within the context of a set of broader macro-issues which are the concern of

the Egyptian government as well as of social scientists and researchers. These issues comprise the uneven nature of Egyptian spatial development, especially within the duality between Lower and Upper Egypt; the extraordinary growth of Cairo into the largest megalopolis of the Middle East and Mediterranean Basin regions; the nature of Egyptian labor market trends, especially with reference to informal, dual and segmented employment structures; and the population which still grows each year by approximately 1.5 million people, or the equivalent of the population of a country the size of Kuwait (Khalifa, *et al.*, 2000). On this last point, whilst it is true that the absolute growth of the Egyptian population remains relatively high (2.1 percent per annum), considerable progress has been made in fertility reduction and movement through the demographic transition. But this progress remains regionally differentiated. Meanwhile, the maldistribution of the Egyptian population, where 95 percent of the population are concentrated in the valley and delta of the Nile, is still regarded as one of the main national population policy challenges (National Population Council, 1996).

Hence the need in this final chapter for further discussion on how my results shed light on these "bigger questions" of Egyptian social, economic and spatial development; as well as a reconsideration of the more micro-scale experiences of the migrants' existence in Cairo, of their lives as migrants and as survivors.

This concluding chapter has three main sections, each divided into subsections. In the first part I confront the objectives of the study as set out in Chapter 4 with my empirical results as presented in Chapters 5 to 8. In doing this I make reference to the several theoretical frameworks that were introduced in Chapter 3; I make comparisons with other empirical studies as recorded in the literature on internal migration in developing countries; and I attempt to critically evaluate the significance of my findings in the light of the aforementioned research questions. The second section of the chapter is a broader discussion of my results in the light of broader issues connected with the nature of migration and development in Egypt; again reference back to key theoretical frames will be made here too. The third and last section of the chapter presents some policy implications of my research, critically summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis, and makes some suggestions for future research.

9.1 Research questions and the empirical findings

I now attempt to match the research questions that I specified in Chapter 4 with the results of my empirical research. To remind the reader, my research objectives were grouped into four categories relating to processes of urban–rural mobility, living and working conditions of migrants, their impact on demography, and the economic consequences of their actions as migrants. I present the matching between each group of objectives and the findings of the empirical study in the following four sub-sections.

9.1.1 Processes of rural–urban migration and mobility in Egypt

The fundamental and overarching research question here concerned the migration choice strategies and motivations of a specific group of rural Egyptians who migrate to Cairo. I asked further, how do those who migrate differentiate themselves from those who do not, or from those who choose to migrate to the Gulf countries or other world destinations? Next, what is the relationship between internal and international migration? Are internal and international migration engaged in sequentially by some individuals? And if so, in which order? With respect to the targeted group of migrants, questions were asked relating to their demographic and socio-economic characteristics. I then posed questions relating to the mechanisms, networks and patterns of migration through space and time. These referred specifically to the social and family networks which facilitate the migration flows from villages to Cairo; and even more specifically to the relevance of the Mabogunje model and to his urban and rural control sub-systems and how they might function in the Egyptian case. I also wanted to know about the frequencies of movement, how this circulation back and forth could take place, and whether a relationship existed between frequency of travel to the home village and village distance from Cairo. Finally, I asked about other means of communication used to keep in touch with the village.

Most of these research questions are rather straightforward: they ask for standard empirical data which collectively build up a picture of the nature of rural–urban interaction and movement, migrants' personal characteristics, and their reasons for engaging in migration to Cairo. Some of the answers do link to theory, but much of my summary of key findings which follows in the next few paragraphs is essentially

descriptive information, although it does constitute “new knowledge” for the Egyptian case.

First, with respect to their basic personal characteristics, and in comparison with the totality of the rural population in Upper Egypt, the migrants I surveyed were young, less educated, and from low-status socio-economic backgrounds. The mean age of migrant laborers was found to be 29 years, with 55 percent aged 20–29. Upper Egyptian migrant laborers start their migratory experience early: 88 percent undertook their first migration before the age of 25, with half leaving their villages between the ages of 15 and 19. Migrants are overwhelmingly poorly educated: 46 percent have no recognized level of schooling, 35 percent only the low-status secondary technical level. Migrants in Cairo – at least those I interviewed in my surveys – were found to come from the poorest and most disadvantaged of rural backgrounds. They came from families which were larger than the regional averages for Upper Egypt, and which were hence characterized by extreme pressure on livelihood resources – particularly income and land (there was a high incidence of landlessness amongst migrant family backgrounds). There is a concentration of origins in the more densely-populated central governorates of Upper Egypt, namely Menia, Assiut, and Souhag. It needs to be stressed, however, that these characteristics are, to a great extent, “self-defined” by my decision to concentrate my fieldwork analysis on a single subset of rural-to-urban migrants, and not engage in a stratified sampling approach across all migrant subtypes.

Secondly, and regarding motives for migrating, these were found to be overwhelmingly economic: unemployment, lack of rural job opportunities, low incomes and very poor living conditions. Cairo offers higher wages (around three times those in Upper Egypt), more regular (though still casual) work and, most important of all, the chance to remit cash and hence support family in Upper Egypt. Migration to Cairo is regarded by a vast majority of migrants as quite simply the only solution for their economic and livelihood problems. Hence, my repeated characterization of it as “survival” migration.

Thirdly, my data pertaining to migration dynamics elucidated the following features. More than a quarter of Upper Egyptian migrants to Cairo had worked in Arab countries, mainly Saudi Arabia, Libya, Iraq and Jordan. Rather than internal leading to international migration, the Egyptian case seems to be the reverse, where international

migration worked as a catalyst for internal migration. This is due to the unexpected timing and circumstances of the return from Iraq and Jordan, and the change in lifestyle due to migration experience which made migrants less connected to their families and places of origin. Living and working in a metropolitan center like Cairo was the easiest alternative to their lives as migrant workers abroad, as well as being a sensible survival and income-earning strategy. However, as I pointed out, there is something of a logical flaw in this conclusion about the sequence of internal versus international migration, since those individuals who had migrated first internally and then abroad are obviously no longer in Egypt. On the other hand, my general conversations and observations with the migrants, and the question in the questionnaire about their future plans, showed that, in fact, the option of subsequently emigrating abroad was not frequently put into practice. Whilst nine in ten of my questionnaire survey respondents were willing to consider a move abroad (motivated above all by the higher wages theoretically available), nearly all were aware that this was practically impossible because of the initial costs and barriers involved nowadays in international labor migration.

Continuing the summary of my information on the dynamics of rural–urban migration, I found plenty of evidence to support the role of migration networks facilitating the migration flows from Upper Egypt to Cairo. Here, however, I found the need to distinguish between two types of networks and prior linkages to Cairo.

Established and settled migrants, who had been living in the Egyptian capital for some time, generally with their families, played almost no role in facilitating the migration of casual laborers. Respondents who had relatives and friends who had permanently settled there said that they hardly ever visited them because of feelings of shame and embarrassment. Moreover, this relationship very much depends on whether the migrants I surveyed came from rural origins which had "counterpart" villages in Cairo made up of permanently-settled migrants from earlier waves of rural–urban migration. In these cases, limited to only 30 of my respondents (one in seven of my sample), a relationship can indeed be maintained, even if it is not particularly strong. For the rest, the key networking role in promoting migration of laborers was played by other such laborer migrants who had already had some experience in the city. Particularly important here were older brothers, other relatives and co-villagers. Indeed social

networks based on kinship and village origin were seen to pattern the main features of the social geography of migrants' lives in Cairo.

In addition, migrants were found to maintain strong contacts with the village through periodic return revisits. The length between successive visits was found to be positively correlated with distance between Cairo and the governorates of origin. The closer the place of origin to Cairo the shorter the length of time between successive visits. This simple statistical finding about distance gives indirect support for the Gravity Model principle of migrant behavior. As well as village visits, migrants kept in contact with their families through other means of communication, especially oral messages sent with colleagues visiting the village. Given the fact – noted above – that migrants work and live in Cairo in groups coming from the same village and often the same extended family, migrants who want to send messages (and money) to their families can easily find trustworthy passengers leaving for their villages almost every day or week. As a means of communication with the village, telephone calls ranked second. Communication through written messages sent via colleagues or via the mail were discovered to be almost non-existent, due to the high illiteracy level among migrants and the easiness of communications via oral messages and telephone calls.

Finally, I found that migrants who have lost contact with their rural origins over time are very few. The percentage of those who appeared to have lost touch was only 1.5. This indicates that overall the orientation to the rural village home areas remains strong, and moreover that the social, kinship and village-based networks are very effective in maintaining this village-based social solidarity.

The above summarizes my main findings concerning the social background characteristics of the migrants; their motives for migrating; and their dynamics of movement from Upper Egypt to Cairo, and back and forth, and their connections to their home villages. Links to theory, at this preliminary stage of my concluding analysis, are rather elementary given the essentially factual and descriptive nature of this first set of research findings. Some moderate support was noted for the Gravity Model as regards distance-decay influences over migration and frequency of travel back and forth, but no evidence was found of step-migration or for the relevance of "intervening opportunities" for migrants to stop somewhere along the migration path

between the Upper Nile Valley and Cairo. From Luxor and Aswan to Menia and Beni-Sueif, migrants boarding the Cairo-bound train only disembark at Cairo. This pattern of migration behavior reinforces the strength of the socio-economic and geographic duality between Lower and Upper Egypt and the irrelevance, at least for the migrant, of intermediate locations and intervening economic opportunities. Hence the role of distance as a significant intervening obstacle is largely offset in the Egyptian case by sizeable income differentials.

The weakness of the Gravity Model is that it is not a model of individual migrant behavior – it does not describe the decision to migrate (Gallup, 1997: 2). On this latter point, the evidence which I collected in my surveys overwhelmingly supported the importance of economic factors in determining migration behavior, and it is not too difficult to link my empirical data to the range of economically-based theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter 3. The "costs and benefits" approach; migration viewed as an "investment in human capital"; the economically-determined "push and pull factors"; and the notion of migration existing between the two "worlds" of the dual economy (a rural world of low incomes, underemployment and limited opportunity, and an urban world of better incomes and employment opportunities) – all resonate with the information and evidence I have collected for the Egyptian case.

However, it has to be admitted that there is an element of tautology in the argument I present above regarding the overarching importance of economic factors, since my study population of labor migrants are self-defined as economically motivated by the need to migrate to search for better work and income opportunities. I shall come back to this critical point a little later. Meantime, I would just point out that, on the other hand, it is one of the basic tenets of the analysis of migration that economic motives are paramount. This remains the case in studies ranging from the "laws" of Ravenstein (1885; 1888), one of which stresses that "most migration takes place for economic reasons", to the work of Todaro nearly a century later: "The overwhelming conclusion of almost all migration studies, both descriptive and econometric, is that people migrate primarily for economic reasons" (Todaro, 1976: 66).

The other link to an established migration model suggested by this first set of research findings on migration behavior brings in Mabogunje's (1970) systems framework. As

noted before, in the overview of migration theory in Chapter 3, and again in Chapter 5 (see section 5.4), this is a theoretically attractive model for framing the analysis of rural–urban migration in the developing world, but it has proved difficult to convincingly demonstrate against reality as a complete analytical system. Reference back to the diagrammatic portrayal of the model in Figure 3.1 will remind us of its component parts and make us realize that much of my analysis in Chapters 5 to 8 has been based on various stages of the model, and on my adaptation of parts of the model in Figure 3.3. For instance, my discussion of migrants' living conditions in both the village and in Cairo in Chapter 7 made explicit reference to rural control systems (land distribution, decisions on leaving etc.) and to rural adjustment mechanisms (reallocation of village labor tasks, increasing responsibilities for women left behind etc.); as well as to migration channels into the urban subsystem (the practice of living together in village groupings, means of finding work etc.). A further explicit reference to system and network approaches emerges from my account of migration decision-making in Chapter 5, and from the detailed material on urban–rural feedback linkages (return visits, other contacts, remittances, personal and family obligations etc.) contained in section 7.3 of Chapter 7. Most of these feedback links can be regarded as positive, thereby acting to sustain and promote the system of rural–urban migration in Egypt. I showed how interpersonal ties of kinship, friendship and shared community origin connected migrants, former migrants and non-migrants (including potential future migrants) in both origin and destination, such that the "migration system" was, again, able to function and reproduce itself across space and time. These network connections constituted a form of social capital that migrants could draw on to gain access to various crucial resources – urban employment, a place to live, the means to remain in contact with the village and to remit savings from their urban labor.

Although the Mabogunje model seems to be based around a clear distinction between the rural and urban "worlds" and an assumption that rural–urban migration is essentially a one-way normative process, its conceptualization as a "system" made up of "networks" enables it to be linked to notions of "circular migration" advanced by authors such as Chapman, Prothero, and others. I shall pick up on these definitions and conceptual debates later in this chapter.

Meanwhile, my reference to the systems and network dimensions of migrants' living and working arrangements leads us into the second major research question, whose empirical results are now summarized in the next subsection.

9.1.2 Living and working conditions of the migrants

Under this second main research objective, I elaborated three general questions which are both empirically descriptive and link to theory and to comparisons. The first compared migrants' living and housing conditions in Cairo with conditions in their villages. Are they better off in Cairo in these respects, or do they deny themselves in order to maximize the transfer of their accumulated capital back to their families and villages? The second question makes the same urban–rural comparison with respect to work experiences. The third question under this general heading explores labor market characteristics in Cairo in more depth. What types of labor do migrants engage in and do they experience any job mobility during their time in Cairo? How are their jobs characteristic of the "informal" sectors of the urban economy, and how is their work to be interpreted in terms of the structuration of the city's labor market?

Migrant household characteristics in villages of origin yield further data confirming that migrants selected for my Cairo-based field survey are drawn from the poorest rural population strata. Average land ownership, for instance, amongst migrant households was found to be only about one third of the Upper Egyptian average (0.36 as against 1.16 feddans respectively). Comparing migrants' living conditions between place of origin and Cairo revealed mixed results: electricity provision was higher in the village than in Cairo (92 versus 72 percent respectively) whilst provision of piped water contrasted the other way (29 as against 65 percent). These comparisons, however, reflect the unequal provision of resources and services as between urban and rural Egypt more generally. Perhaps more revealing of migrant lifestyles in Cairo was the key finding regarding living density: the mean number of persons per sleeping room in Cairo was 6.8, nearly double the average figure for those same migrants' households in their home villages in Upper Egypt (3.5 persons per room).

So, living conditions of the Upper Egyptian migrants in Cairo are very poor. Migrant laborers were found to live together in groups in crowded and cheap places; rooms were

minimally equipped and toilet facilities shared by up to 20 persons. Migrants from the same village, or sometimes the same governorate, tended to live together. Living together in this way undoubtedly represents an act of self-denial in order to increase the net cash income left over to send back to the home village. Yet such living behavior also makes it easy to keep the same social contacts and traditions of the village; at the same time this practice weakens the mechanisms through which migrants might acquire the new behavioral patterns that prevail in urban environments. It is also a defense mechanism to keep their essentially rural, Upper Egyptian mentality and identity; and living together in kin-based and village-of-origin groups makes migrants feel safer than living alone. Hence the role of village-based social and kin networks seems paramount in structuring the entire migratory experience of these rural-origin migrant laborers.

My data on living costs of migrant laborers in Cairo revealed further dimensions of their self-deprivation and meager existence. I found that the average daily expenditure of my sampled population was 7.34 LE (or about US$1.80). This included an average of 0.75 LE per day for rent (but many respondents lived for nothing in derelict accommodation), and 3.64 LE for food; other items of expenditure mainly comprised tea, cigarettes and transportation within the Cairo area to and from workplaces. Because of the non-existent or very poor cooking facilities in their overcrowded rooms, most migrant laborers bought their food as ready-made snacks from street-vendors or cheap cafés. Bread, beans and falafel were their staples; they rarely or never ate meat, except on visits home to their village. In Chapter 7 I gave some interview quotes to expand the information on migrants' meager diets. Here is one more typical quote, from veteran migrant Ibrahim: "*I have a piece of bread and falafel in the morning and drink a cup of tea. In all that costs me half a pound. When God bestows on me more money at midday I buy two pieces of bread and some beans. If I do not earn any money, I wait for dinner in the evening in order to save some money.*"

My findings indicate that, on the whole, both living conditions and diet tend to be better in the villages of origin: yet more evidence for the functional and psychological importance of the rural "anchor" for these circulating laborers. What is lacking there is, of course, work: and this is precisely what propels migrants to Cairo where, again on the whole (there are some exceptions, mainly single young men with few family obligations), migrants eke out a frugal lifestyle whose main objective is to maximize

work, and therefore income-earning opportunities, and to minimize their costs of living there in order, in turn, to maximize the fraction of their incomes that they can send back to the village for the maintenance of their households. The per diem calculations from the questionnaire survey responses give a simple answer to this: mean daily income was 19.31 LE (less than 5 US$) which, when compared to mean daily expenses in Cairo (LE 7.34), leaves a "surplus" of 11.97 LE or 62 percent of income.

Next I summarize the work characteristics of the particular segment of migrants I sampled. These are centered mainly in the construction and general laboring sectors. Working hours per day for the surveyed population were found to vary between 2 and 18 hours; the average was 8.5 hours per day. Daily work is not guaranteed. Some migrants work seven days while others may, if they are unlucky, work only one day per week. The average number of working days per week is almost five (4.9 to be exact). Migrants' work is very tough and hard, especially in task-based activities. Moreover, none of the migrant laborers are covered by any type of health or social insurance, and in addition, about one fifth of the migrants in the survey had had serious injuries related to their job while working in Cairo. Nevertheless their rationale is clear: average earnings are far beyond average wages in rural Upper Egypt, by a factor of two to three times.

With respect to the evolution of various jobs and the potential professional development of migrants, my questionnaire survey showed that almost one half of migrant laborers maintained that their job type and conditions remained about the same. They reported that, since their first arrival in Cairo, they have been doing the same tasks without any progression or acquisition of any new skills. About one fourth said that work conditions got better, while the remaining one quarter of migrants, said that conditions got worse. The main complaint from those who claimed that their work conditions deteriorated was increased monitoring by the police, rather than worse treatment by employers. However, here I have to acknowledge that the way my sample was selected did not really allow me to measure upward job mobility out of the casual labor sector, since those who might have moved to more permanent jobs would not be waiting around on street-corners or in coffee-shops to be hired – or to be interviewed by me.

How do these findings compare with the lives of rural–urban migrant laborers in other parts of the Third World? What are the implications of my findings for elucidating theoretical explanations of internal mobility in developing countries? These are enormous comparative questions which can only be answered here with reference to a few chosen examples taken from the review literature. To do more than this would be to engage in literature survey of all relevant studies on rural–urban migration, something which has already been specified as beyond the scope of this thesis. Moreover, my theoretical references at this point will also be limited, given that in a later section of this chapter (9.3) I will widen the theoretical debate in the context of the relevance of the Egyptian findings to broader questions of internal migration, development, inequality and modernization.

A useful starting-point is the finding summarized (but also then rather rigidly circumscribed) in the penultimate paragraph – namely that there is no net change, or improvement, in migrants' job experiences whilst they are in Cairo. This sheds interesting light on the Todaro model as discussed in Chapter 3, supporting some aspects but challenging others. To briefly recap, the Todaro model "postulates that migration proceeds in response to rural–urban differences in *expected rather than real earnings*"; and that "expected gains are measured by (a) the *difference in real incomes between rural and urban job opportunities*, and (b) the *probability of a new migrant obtaining a job*" (Todaro, 1976: 28–29, original author's italicized emphases). Implicit in this formulation is the notion that the migrant can take refuge in the urban "traditional" (i.e. informal) sector whilst searching for that elusive (but ultimately attainable) "regular" job (Todaro, 1976: 33).

What I found is that migrants moving to Cairo do so in the reasonably secure knowledge that, despite some initial adjustment problems, their urban wages will significantly exceed what they could have earned as poor landless or land-hungry workers in Upper Egypt. Yet this anticipation of higher urban wages is based, by and large, not on a realistic expectation that they will ever gain access to regular, formal-sector employment, but on their knowledge of their chances in the informal sector, *where they will stay*. Despite Todaro's hypothesis that the probability of finding regular urban wage employment increases over time as the migrant builds up and broadens his urban contacts (1976: 31), in Cairo this does not happen because the social contacts and

networks that migrants have are limited to others of their own social class and geographic origins, and do not seem to overlap into "mainstream" Cairo society. It is true that my research design did not really enable me to track upward job mobility out of the casual labor sector, but my general knowledge of the Cairo work scene, and several remarks by the migrants themselves, lead me to be fairly confident that cross-segment job mobility is rather limited.

Some illuminating parallels with my study are found in Ogura's research on rural–urban migration in Zambia, to Lusaka and the Copper Belt towns. According to Ogura (1991), migrants always hope to get jobs in the formal sector, but most cannot. Hence they too are forced to take up jobs in the urban informal sector. Incomes from such jobs are low compared to formal sector wages. Nevertheless, and despite defraying the costs of accommodation, food and transportation (all higher in the town than they would be if the migrant stayed in the rural area), low-wage casual urban jobs furnish migrants with incomes which are at least twice the average rural level.

A somewhat different comparative perspective comes from a study of rural–urban migration in Bolivia by Pérez-Crespo (1991). Here too, in La Paz and elsewhere, many rural-origin migrants were incorporated into the urban informal sector in construction, personal services and as self-employed traders – "all activities that keep them slightly above the survival limit". However, channels of upward mobility do here appear open, so that "as soon as they become acquainted with the way the (urban) market operates, master some urban skills, and save some capital, they move into self-employed activities". This self-employment may well still be in the informal sector, but it does represent socio-economic progress over time, something relatively absent in the Egyptian case. However, one significant difference with rural–urban migration in Bolivia (and in Latin America in general) is that it tends to be family migration, leading eventually to a permanent rural to urban resettlement. Similarly in the Philippines Koo and Smith (1983) found that recent in-migrants to cities were especially likely to get employment in the informal sector but that, with time, they were gradually incorporated into the formal urban economy. Clearly on this particular aspect of the Todaro model, evidence differs across the developing world and general conclusions can only be applied with caution. My evidence for Egypt, taking into account in-built problems of research design as regards this question, tends to suggest that migrants engaged in

rural–urban circulation are by their very native “condemned” to the segment of casual labor. This does not prove that other migrants do not experience upward mobility; and I have no solid evidence to prove this one way or the other. However, my suspicion remains that this is limited.

9.1.3 Impact of rural–urban migration on demographic behavior

The third set of issues as set out in my list of research questions is the relation between migration and modernization as measured by the change in attitudes towards family and children, and the use of contraceptive methods as a proxy of the modernization effect of migration. The key question here was whether migrants' time spent working in Cairo affected their demographic behavior or not. I wanted to test whether the demographic implications of rural–urban mobility in Egypt extended beyond the simple transfer of “surplus population” from high-fertility regions of low economic dynamism to a more modern urban economy; or whether, through the possible adoption of urban norms of demographic behavior, more long-lasting demographic behavioral trends were inculcated.

To my slight surprise, I discovered that migrant laborers actually had more children than their village counterparts, thus contradicting my assumption in which I hypothesized that migrant laborers would have lower fertility than their counterparts in rural Upper Egypt because of their exposure to modernization and the urban lifestyle of Cairo. As I explained in Chapter 8, this is – partially – due to the fact that migrants do not represent the average of rural Upper Egypt residents. In particular, they are less educated and poorer than their counterparts in the village. And poverty, illiteracy, lack of education, landlessness and large families all seem to be linked together in the Egyptian case. Furthermore, most of the surveyed migrants remained psychologically fixed to their villages in terms of most of their attitudes and behaviors, and hence their demographic “outcomes” were not much affected by the “urban experience”.

In addition to simple contrasts in extant family size, my questionnaire data also revealed other differences which reinforce the picture whereby migrant laborers are more

socially conservative than either the residents of Cairo or the general population of Upper Egypt from which they are drawn. Despite the fact of having an above average number of children, more than half the respondents wished for more children, especially sons. The overall mean desired number of children was 5.6, higher than the total fertility rate of Upper Egypt, which is currently 4.5. Consistent with this, the contraceptive prevalence rate among migrant laborers was found to be about half the general level of couples in rural Upper Egypt.

Further significant aspects of demographic and social behavior were noted in the realms of education and treatment of sons versus daughters. Although there was a general trend for respondents to place a high value on the education of their own children, the education of sons was favored over that of daughters in many cases. This was also reflected by the fact that, for older migrants with teenage or older children, girls had been started at work earlier than boys.

So, contrary to my initial hypothesis about the socially and demographically modernizing effects of rural–urban migration, I found the persistence, even reinforcement (as a reaction to the "immoral" aspects of city life), of socially conservative behavior patterns with regard to family size, fertility behavior and attitudes, and gender relations. This same picture came out when I asked if respondents and interviewees wanted to eventually reunite with their families in Cairo rather than continue to keep them in Upper Egypt. Although a minority considered bringing their families to Cairo as a possibility, the majority rejected this option, citing both moral and practical reasons. According to Ibrahim, "*bringing the family to Cairo is impossible because of the expense, the cost of housing*". Diab was more emphatic: "*No, Cairo turns kids evil. They would come to know about women and the like. We come from Upper Egypt and we do not get involved in such misbehavior. I would rather continue to live here alone*."

Further discussion on the interrelationships between migration and demography in Egypt will be picked up a little later in this chapter.

9.1.4 Economic aspects of rural–urban migration

The last set of research questions tackles various economic implications of the Egyptian rural–urban migratory phenomenon. A vital question here concerns the incomes of migrants in the urban setting of Cairo, and the use of this income to sustain both themselves in the city and their families in the villages and home districts. In Chapter 4 I asked the specific question: is rural–urban migration from Upper Egypt to Cairo merely a survival mechanism, redistributing surplus labor and enabling rural households to avoid sliding further into poverty and overpopulation? Or does the income earned by the migrants enable them to develop their villages by investing in new housing, infrastructures, and economic activities such as farming equipment or rural industries? I was also keen to explore migrants’ awareness of national plans for developing the country and its constituent parts. Finally, I probed migrants’ perceptions of their own futures: whether they planned to move permanently to Cairo; to move on to somewhere else; to alternate periods of work in Cairo with spells back in the home village; or to return definitively back to the place of origin.

As I have mentioned several times before, the main motives of this migration are economic. Migrants' savings are the means of life for their families in Upper Egypt. They sacrifice many of the basics of human life in Cairo in order to save money to sustain the needs of their families. I noted earlier that migrants were able to save, on average, about 12 LE per day (rather less than 3 US$) and that this represented 62 percent of their average daily earnings, the rest going on living costs in Cairo. Working on a monthly basis, my questionnaire data revealed that migrants saved on average just under 200 LE (slightly less than 50 US$), this being around half their mean monthly income. The difference between this proportion and the figure of 62 percent quoted above is due to the cost of return visits which nearly all migrants make on a regular basis to their families and villages. Migrants obviously recognize the crucial value of their savings while working in Cairo, since it is the very essence of their being there; but they think that they could have been saving more money if the cost of living in Cairo was not so high. Hence they tend to do all they can to minimize their living costs in the city, by sacrificing themselves in ways that were spelt out above (9.1.2) and in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

These data on migrant incomes and savings are, I believe, uniquely precise. It is well known that migrants are often extremely reluctant to divulge any details of their financial circumstances in surveys of this kind (Bilsborrow *et al*., 1984). From her village-based fieldwork with Egyptian women whose husbands were working away Brink (1991) found that most women were not told by their husbands how much they actually earned – Brink had this information for only two of her 79 interviewees. By interviewing men in Cairo I was able to access this privileged information, and cross-check it with employers, other migrants etc., so that I can vouch for the broad accuracy of my data. The proportion of total earnings that was found to be sent back to the village – just under half – is broadly consistent with the findings of some other studies done on male rural–urban migrants in various countries of the developing world; if somewhat higher than most. For instance, studies in 16 Indian villages (Connell *et al*., 1976) revealed that the remittances sent from towns by rural–urban migrants amounted to between 26 and 29 percent of total earnings (based on village averages). A study of 1140 working migrant males in Nairobi (Johnson and Whitelaw, 1974) found that, whilst 89 percent sent regular remittances to their families, the average amount remitted was only 21 percent of earnings. In northern Pakistan, according to a study by Mohamed *et al*. (1973), 91 percent of the rural–urban migrants surveyed remitted, sending on average 37 percent of their monthly incomes. Further discussion of comparative data on remittances is given by Stark (1978: 34–47) where the difficulties of measurement are also pointed out (in many countries remittances are sent as gifts or brought to the village as goods rather than cash).

A great proportion of migrants' savings goes on supporting their families in Upper Egypt and satisfying family members’ basic needs: food, clothing, children's education etc. About 90 percent of migrants declared that the main thing they do with the money they save is to support their families. Building a new house or a new housing extension to the family's house is regarded as a main objective to save money. One fourth of migrants said that they were saving money primarily to build a house. Other plans were to devote extra resources to educate children, to buy land, or buy home appliances and durable goods, or cover the costs of marriage.

By and large, the expenditure patterns reflect a commitment to (and above all the need for) “survival” rather than investing for a more enterprising future through the

development of new businesses. Once basic needs of food and clothing were provided for, the general preference was next for improving housing conditions and purchasing household goods in order to enhance the immediate quality of life for the rural family. On the other hand, my field observations in rural areas revealed that some families allocate resources better than others. The issue of spending money on children's sweets was mentioned in Chapter 7 (section 7.4.4). Ali highlighted a similar dilemma when I asked him if he was thinking of getting a TV, though his views were pretty firm: "*No, not at all, even if I had the money. I will never think about getting such things. The only thing I think about is getting a sheep, or a calf, or some other animals. These things earn money for us, but the TV would just be a waste of our money.*" Where migrants do have plans to set up small businesses on their return to the village, such plans are expressed as vague dreams rather than practical possibilities – above all because of the shortage of capital to hand. Overall, in my village fieldwork, I found very little evidence of rural–urban circulating migrants having the wherewithal to develop their own businesses. Zaky's answer to my question about his future hopes indicates a wish to indeed do something different, but the lack of means to achieve this: "*I pray God may provide me with a lot of money in order to be able to establish a private business, or buy a minibus on installments… I want to do something different…*" Even a new house remains only a dream for many migrants: "*Every young man dreams of a private house of his own, which would be his own world, but how?*" (Henein).

9.2 Research findings as related to the processes of modernization and development in Egypt

An attempt is made in this section to relate the empirical findings of my study to the main contextual "macro-question" that I aimed to investigate, which is: what is the role of the rural–urban migration process in the modernization and development of a rapidly-transforming society and economy such as that found in Egypt? Urbanization plays an absolutely key role in the Egyptian modernization process, so I start with a consideration of this parameter and its relationship with rural–urban migration. I will then move on to a discussion of some broader theoretical aspects of my findings pertaining to the labor market, remittances and socio-economic change, and socio-demographic aspects of migration and Egyptian development.

9.2.1 Rural–urban migration and urbanization

According to the United Nations Population Fund (1995), five major factors emerge as principally responsible for the rise in urbanization and other forms of internal migration in developing countries. All of these factors relate to differences in living conditions between areas. The most common cause of rural-to-urban migration is rural unemployment, resulting from the mechanization of agricultural processes and rapid rural population growth. A second related factor is the lack of social services in rural areas, particularly education. Since secondary schools and institutions of higher education are more abundant in urban areas, students often have no other alternative than leaving the countryside for the cities in order to continue their education. Many of these students decide to remain in the city after graduation.

Lack of cultivable land in rural areas is a third cause of internal migration. Land shortages in some rural areas have attained frightening proportions, mainly due to high rural population growth. Environmental degradation further aggravates the shortage of arable land in many parts of the developing world. More and more people have to compete for less land, and this trend is expected to continue in the future. A fourth factor, which contributes to the process of urbanization and internal migration, is natural disasters, particularly droughts. Recurrent droughts in some parts of Africa and Asia have driven large numbers of people to urban centers in search of food and water. A fifth factor is civil conflicts. Internal conflicts in parts of Africa, Latin America and Asia have led to large-scale internal migration streams and mass population displacements.

Regarding motives for migrating in the Egyptian case, we have seen that these are overwhelmingly economic, composed of factors such as unemployment, lack of rural job opportunities, very low incomes and bad living conditions in rural Egypt. Cairo offers better wages, more regular work (albeit in a narrow range of casual and poorly-paid jobs), more exciting life, and the most important factor of all which is the chance to remit and support family members at home in the village. So that migration from Upper Egypt to Cairo is a rational strategy chosen by many young rural men who face limited economic opportunities in their villages. For many migrants, it is a waiting strategy until they can find permanent and more secure job opportunities in their

villages, especially in the government sector. For many, however, this is a somewhat mythical hope, and so they are forced to prolong their migratory existence in Cairo.

Rapid urbanization fed by rural–urban migration appears to be a constant accompaniment of the modernization process in the developing world; whether it is an automatic natural correlate to development is a debatable point, given the range of social, economic and political variables that are part and parcel of the modern conceptualization of development. Skeldon (1997: 4) expresses the mainstream orthodox view when he states that "the migration of large numbers of workers from rural to urban areas could be seen as good for development as it leads to an equalization of wage levels, not only by slowing wage increases in the towns but also by increasing the flow of income into the rural areas through remittances". The same author goes on to point out that "Despite their tenuous and exploited position, (the migrants) may be better off than if they had remained in their home villages" (Skeldon, 1997: 3). My own findings for Egypt pretty much echo this middle-of-the-road approach by Skeldon which, rather than seeing migration as "good" or "bad" per se, sees it as part and parcel of the development process in the Third World. However it would also be unwise to ignore the neo-Marxist contributions of writers such as Samir Amin (1974) whose basic thesis that African migration has been a sort of "gift" from the poor, rural areas to the rich cities has set the agenda for wide-ranging debates about migration as part of the structuration of (under)development (see especially the essays in van Binsbergen and Meilink, 1978), in Africa and elsewhere (see Harris, 1995 for an analogous interpretation of international migration).

Let us try to contextualize rural–urban migration, urbanization and modernization in Egypt within a broad international perspective, first by reference to some generalized statistics, and then by focusing more carefully on *types* of migration.

Lucas, in two lengthy review papers (1997, 1998), has compiled useful comparative statistics on urbanization and internal migration trends in several countries of the developing world, as well as three continents (Africa, Asia, South America), for the period 1950–2000. Overall Lucas found that less-developed-country (LDC) urban growth fluctuated fairly closely around 4 percent per annum throughout the five decades, but the African figure was somewhat higher, at around 5 percent, than the

average aggregate figures for Asia or South America. For the five successive decades (1950–60, 1960–70, 1970–80, 1980–90, 1990–2000), African annual urban growth was 4.7, 4.9, 4.8, 5.1 and 5.0 percent respectively. Meanwhile, the proportion of the total African population classed as urban rose from 15 percent in 1950 to 41 percent in 2000 (for LDCs globally it rose from 17 to 45 percent). Egypt's urban population, 42.6 percent of the national total in 1996, is close to both the continent's and the global LDC average; but on the other hand has been static as a percentage since the 1976 Census (refer back to Table 3.2). Moreover, *officially recorded* rural–urban migration has been declining as a proportion of total Egyptian internal migration (see Chapter 2, section 2.3 and Chapter 3, section 3.1 for details); instead inter-urban migration is the main migration component of the fourfold matrix of possibilities (rural–rural, rural–urban, urban–urban, urban–rural), as it is in most "semi-developed" countries such as South Korea and many South American states. Rural–rural migration represents less than 4 percent of Egyptian internal mobility, in contrast to many other African countries and the cases of India and Taiwan where 56 percent and 41 percent, respectively, of all internal migration was inter-rural during the 1980s (Lucas, 1998). Interestingly, out of 26 countries tabulated by Lucas (1998: 4), Egypt was one of those where the migration component of urban growth was lower than average. This may reflect the fact that rural–urban migration and urbanization in Egypt have now reached a "mature" stage, with Greater Cairo and other urban governorates so large, extensively spread and densely inhabited as to be incapable of further rapid growth by in-migration. However, it also has to be remembered that there is likely to be a large quantity of unrecorded rural–urban migration, including the migrants who are the research subjects of this thesis, and who have to endure impossibly crowded and tough lives in the interstices of the urban housing fabric.

Perhaps more important than these aggregate statistics on internal migration and urbanization trends in different Third World areas (such statistics may not reflect reality very closely anyway because of well-known deficiencies of migration data in LDCs), is a more focused discussion on *types* of migration, in order to put the Egyptian case in context. Some fairly general and instructive contrasts can be drawn between Latin America on the one hand, where "the great bulk of migrants to the cities have left the countryside permanently … they move on to different cities and they may return to their place of origin to visit relatives and friends, but few come back to rural areas to stay"

(Nelson, 1976: 721); and the situation in Africa and Asia on the other hand, where migration is gender-select (mostly males) and temporary. Egypt obviously falls into the latter type, also as befits its geographical location astride the Africa–Asia boundary. But in other respects, as I noted much earlier, Egypt and the Middle East in general sit uneasily in these global continental comparisons, being geographically, culturally, demographically and developmentally different from Latin America, "black" Africa or South and East Asia. Moreover, the dearth of published research on other Middle Eastern countries makes it difficult to know whether Egypt is at all typical of the Middle East/Southern Mediterranean region, although some similarities with Morocco and Turkey were noted in Chapter 3.

In some senses, Egyptian rural–urban migration – at least the particular type which I have studied – represents a rather elementary form of migration: temporary, male-only, with limited social contact with the urban context, and oriented almost totally to the village as regards remittances, return visits and the ultimate permanent return. It is almost the complete opposite to Caribbean internal migration, for instance, which is characterized by a majority of female movers and involves lots of step and multiple migrations, based on case studies of Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Guyana (Hope, 1989).

It is also important not to view the Egyptian case as static. Authors writing about other African contexts have often noted the passage over time from single male migration to family-based moves. According to Caldwell (1969), seasonal migration to towns was a dominant feature of colonial Africa; later, as urban areas evolved industrial and service sectors, migration has become more permanent. Ogura (1991), researching Zambia, notes a similar development: "After … finding a job (in the town), single male migrants go back to their home villages and find spouses. Then they return to the towns with their wives… Married male migrants are now accompanied by their families… This means that the circular migrant labor force of the colonial period has now changed very much." In Egypt the rural–urban migration and circulation of male laborers seems an unusually stable and unchanging trend, extending back to the early decades of the previous century. I also have to acknowledge that my sample design and data collection at field sites in Cairo where laborers gather meant that I only interviewed migrant workers from Upper Egypt, and tended to leave out those who might have settled

permanently in Cairo. Of course, there has been some permanent family migration from Upper Egypt to Cairo (my own family history illustrates this), and some migrants whom I surveyed had relatives permanently resident in Cairo. And a few of my respondents were possibly planning to eventually settle in Cairo themselves. Other routes to permanent migration involve transfers from Upper Egypt for purposes of further and higher education, government employment, business migration etc. But these have not been cases of mass mobility like the labor migrants I have studied.

Finally, in this discussion of the nature of Egyptian rural–urban migration, we can refer to some standard typologies of internal migration in developing societies. Zelinsky's (1971) celebrated "hypothesis of the mobility transition" is based more on the historical evolution of mobility types in Western societies, but it offers one or two guiding pointers, as I drew attention to in Chapter 3 (see back to section 3.4.2). For instance Zelinsky states that in "late transitional society", when rates of population natural increase start to decline, traditional types of mobility, such as rural–urban migration, also slacken off, but various forms of circulation increase in volume and complexity. This might indicate that the Egyptian case, where "circulation" (to-and-fro movement between rural and urban areas rather than definitive migration transfers) seems nowadays to predominate, is an instance of "late transitional society".

Pryor's (1975) interesting discussion of migration in the process of modernization, which he builds around Zelinsky's (1971) mobility transition model, notes that temporary moves of the type I have documented for Egypt, although they cross the "frontier between the periphery and the center" (i.e. between Upper Egypt and Cairo), are "unlikely … to cross the traditional/modern boundary". This, I feel, is an instructive observation, which needs spelling out in a little more detail to bring out its relevance for the Egyptian case. Rural–urban long-distance migration from Upper Egypt to Cairo *is* a significant phenomenon in that it connects the two parts of the dual spatial economy of Egypt, thereby transcending the core/periphery boundary within the country. But in another respect such migration is a "closed system" (or at least a semi-closed one) in that the migrants circulate nearly always back to their place of origin and intersect only partially with the urban environment. This interaction is restricted to a narrow range of jobs in Cairo's segmented labor market (more on this very soon), and is paralleled by almost zero integration with the local Cairo population.

Typologically, we can try to locate rural–urban migration between Upper Egypt and Cairo within the matrix of space–time mobility types developed by Gould and Prothero (1975) and by Chapman and Prothero (1985) in their respective work on African mobility and on Third World "circulation" which I earlier briefly introduced in Chapter 3 (section 3.4). Gould and Prothero's typological model consists of four directional forms (rural–urban, urban–rural, rural–rural and urban–urban) and a time and frequency-based division (with subdivisions) into "migration" and "circulation". Self-evidently my research has been studying a form of rural–urban movement (with urban–rural return). The more difficult question is to decide whether it should be classed as migration or circulation, and which subtype. According to Gould and Prothero, circulation can be divided into daily, periodic, seasonal, and long-term; and migration into irregular and permanent. Clearly the Egyptian case does not conform to daily or seasonal circulation (since the essence of the latter is regular movements integrated with seasonal work in harvesting crops); nor is it permanent migration (except in those rare cases where the migrant ends up staying in Cairo for good, relocating his family there). Long-term circulation, as defined by Gould and Prothero, involves absence of more than one year, yet with the intention always to return; this too does not apply to the Egyptian case where frequent returns take place, as we saw earlier (the average frequency of return was every three months – see Table 7.8). Long-term circulation is appropriate to other African mobility contexts, notably in East and South Africa, according to Gould and Prothero (1975). Irregular migrations are described by Gould and Prothero as not permanent, in that further movement is likely in the future, but *neither the timing nor the direction* of such movement is known. This latter criterion of unknown direction removes the application of this subtype to the Egyptian case, whose directions of movement are known and fixed as Cairo and the home village. (Note that Gould and Prothero's use of the term "irregular" refers to the unpredictable nature of this form of migration rather than its "illegal" status as in more recent discussions of international migration – see, for example, Ghosh, 1998). We are therefore left with "periodic circulation" as the most appropriate subtype in the Gould and Prothero typology: "periodic circulation may vary in length from one night away … to one year, though it is more usual for periodic circulation to be shorter in duration than seasonal circulation" (Gould and Prothero, 1975): 43). This well describes the Egyptian regime where most labor migrants return every few weeks to their home villages, but continue

their migratory linkage to Cairo over several years, even decades. The strictly labor function of the migration I observed perhaps also leads the way open to other terminologies, such as “labor circulation” (a preferred term of Mitchell, 1969, referring to the South and East African cases) or “labor migration” (but this term is more often ascribed to international migration of the “guestworker” type). This by no means exhausts the lexicon of terms which might be applied to the Egyptian case. Chapman and Prothero (1985: 8–13) provide a useful set of tables which offer other possibilities. For instance, “shuttle migration” involves “search for work to augment meager agricultural incomes”. There is “very little financial or social investment in the city”; migrants “sleep in the open, or in group-rented rooms or employer-provided barracks”; their “social interaction (is) almost entirely with other migrants from the village”; and their “employment (is) in traditional or day-laboring sectors” (Chapman and Prothero, 1985: 12). This, too, closely describes the Egyptian situation. Skeldon’s (1977) variant of this term is “pendular migration” based on his research on migration and urbanization in Peru, and applied to absences of up to three months or so – again the norm for the Egyptian rural–urban migrants in this study.

In contrast, migration in the Egyptian case is temporary. The percent of those who lost contact with their origin is very small. This may be attributed, in part, to the gender aspect of the Egyptian labor migration which is male-dominated. Migrants' ties with their origins are strengthened by the fact that they leave their families there.

9.2.2 The labor market

When I attempted to draw a comparison between the migrant laborers and their equivalents from Cairo in the workspace I discovered that no Cairo-born native workers – not even those with limited educational qualifications who therefore come from an equivalent low-status social background to the Upper Egypt migrants – were working as unskilled casual laborers; and furthermore, that no local workers were even willing to consider taking such work nowadays. They see that unskilled laborers come from Upper Egypt (and from other peripheral Egyptian regions), but Cairo-born natives only seek better work. Cairo residents have more options than those who came from Upper Egypt to work in Cairo, and therefore they shun working as ordinary laborers in the building sector. If they do not have any qualification to do specialized work, they might

work as street-vendors, in a coffee shop, or in any workshop or trade with any of their relatives. Upper Egyptian laborers, on the contrary, are the backbone of the building sector in Cairo. They have effectively “taken over” much of the city’s huge construction sector, particularly that which operates according to informal-sector “rules” (except, of course, that these are norms of behavior rather than written or codified rules). They have made this “niche” their own, to the extent that local workers, even those with equivalently low levels of education and literacy, do not even contemplate this work, which is therefore seen as exclusively the work of migrants from the south.

The above summary of the labor market behavior of Upper Egyptian migrants in Cairo provides strong support for the existence of a segmented structure, in which the construction sector is the most obvious segment which is “fenced off” for Upper Egyptian migrant labor. The strength of the barriers – wage levels, working conditions, institutional impediments, perceptions of types of work etc. – means a kind of double labor market immobility: the vast majority of migrants are simply incapable of moving out of unskilled work in the construction and casual laboring sectors, and this is complemented by the situation in which local uneducated workers would not demean to offer themselves to these low-status “migrant jobs”. This challenges the Harris and Todaro (1970) model of rural–urban migration which assumes that most urban in-migrants are initially absorbed by the traditional sector while they seek better employment opportunities in the modern sector. My research findings suggest that most Upper Egyptian migrants do not succeed in moving from the traditional to the modern labor market of Cairo, although the nature of my research design restrains me from being too confident in making this statement.

Rather than aim at integration within the modern sector of the Cairo economy (an ambition which is regarded as absolutely unattainable), most Upper Egyptian labor migrants remain firmly oriented to their home districts and villages. They constitute a kind of “rural–urban labor pool” (Nelson, 1976). “At any given time, some members of the family are in the city earning money while others remain at home to cultivate … land and attend to other family interests. The rural base represents a permanent safe haven for those in the city who become ill, elderly, or unemployed.” (Nelson, 1976: 723). The Egyptian case matches this concept of the “rural–urban pool” rather closely, with the proviso that here (unlike many other migration contexts) males are solely the

migrants, expressing the sharp gender role differentiation that exists in rural Egyptian society (Brink 1991).

So, rather than processes of migrant socio-economic integration occurring in the urban area, rural values and networks are projected into the urban space of Cairo, conditioning virtually all aspects of migrants' lives in the city. Kinship, district of origin and common occupational networks seem to affect all social and labor market outcomes of migrants in Cairo. This has been demonstrated statistically by Assaad (1997) who found correlations between these variables, particularly as regards access or non-access to higher-status craft jobs. Such jobs were denied to Upper Egyptian migrants. The Cairo case is not unique: Ahmad (1992) found similar associations between migrant origins and ethnicity, place of residence in the city, and employment, in a study of Karachi.

The virtual "labor market apartheid" I observed in Cairo with Upper Egyptian migrants has some aspects which are not so negative, and which are supported by other empirical research and theory. Two key features stand out here: migrants' overall incomes are at least equivalent to those of other low-status groups in the city, as was pointed out in Chapter 6 (see 6.2.3); and unemployment is likewise probably no worse, and possibly better, than the Cairo average. The rationale for this can be explained as follows. Unlike local Cairo workers, migrants are prepared to do *any* jobs at whatever the going payment rate is on the informal market: thus they work longer (and so suffer less unemployment), and eventually accrue higher incomes, than many locals who are fussy about what work they do and suffer chronic underemployment. This is consistent with a growing body of evidence which suggests that "migration results in higher incomes for the migrants, labor force participation rates are higher for migrants than the average for urban areas, and the unemployment rate for migrants is lower (than that) among the urban-born" (Griffin, 1976: 359). Specific demonstrations of this have been carried out by Pérez-Crespo (1991) for Bolivia and Vijverberg and Zeager (1994) for Tanzania. Just to explore the Tanzanian findings for a moment, Vijverberg and Zeager found that rural–urban migrants initially earned lower incomes than urban natives, but this gap narrowed with time so that after ten years migrants were better-off in earnings terms. Galor and Stark (1991) hypothesize that migrants work harder in order to overcome the financial and psychological costs of migration and also in anticipation of returning to a lower wage when they go back to their home communities. Also, where "target

migrants" have a specific home-community target to strive towards (a new house, more land, the cost of a marriage etc.), they will work as much as they can in order to achieve the target as soon as possible (Skeldon, 1990: 138).

9.2.3 Remittances and socio-economic change

For Upper Egyptian migrants in Cairo, and for many other groups of labor migrants worldwide, the principal economic return of migration is the remittances (Taylor, 1999). As we saw in detail in Chapter 7, remittances constitute the main material linkages between the Upper Egyptian migrants in Cairo and their families in the village. The specific question here is: to what extent have these remittances contributed to the development process and the alleviation of poverty? Given that the migrants' families in Upper Egypt are striving to escape from poverty and from very low levels of socio-economic well-being, the potential effect of remittances is vital.

Family members who work in Cairo ensure a generally sustainable, semi-permanent and consistent flow of income to their families in Upper Egypt. However, it is not a surprise that the effect of these remittances is less than the effect of the remittances sent by Egyptian emigrants to the Arab Gulf countries before the Second Gulf War. Emigrants to the Gulf countries were not pushed to migrate due to the lack of job opportunities in their villages in most cases, but migrated mainly to get benefit from the very high difference between incomes and opportunities in the rural agricultural sector and the available job opportunities in the Gulf states. In other words, emigration to the Arab Gulf countries was not a survival strategy such as the current migration of the Upper Egyptian laborers to Cairo: pull factors rather than push factors predominated in the Gulf migration.

The effect of the emigrants' remittances before the Second Gulf War resulted in a building boom in rural Upper Egypt, where most returned migrants managed to build new and well-equipped houses in their villages. In addition, many of the returned migrants invested part of their remittances in non-agricultural projects in their villages. With respect to migrants to Cairo, the case is rather different, but with a few similarities. It depends also on the economic status of migrants' families. The vast majority of migrants' families – being poor – use the remitted money to sustain their

basic needs, mainly food and clothes. After satisfying these needs, a small proportion of migrants and migrants' families use remitted capital to build or extend houses or to help cover marriage expenses of a family member, most probably the migrant himself. The conclusion is that the main use of the remitted money is for consumption, not for investment. The severe need of the remitted money for sheer survival purposes lowers the probability of using it for any other purpose than satisfying the basic needs of migrants' families. Generally speaking, migration has improved the families' quality of life and contributed to rural poverty alleviation; but it has not been invested in ways that might stimulate long-term economic development in Upper Egypt, for instance in increasing the technological basis of agriculture, or in financing small-scale industries. Even the proliferation of petty services, which one notes in other return migration contexts in other parts of the world (King, 1986; 2000), where returnee savings are ploughed into shops, cafés, taxis etc., appears not to be replicated on any scale in Egypt.

The effects of rural–urban migration between Upper Egypt and Cairo, and of the remittances which derive from this migration, seem to lead to the maintenance of a curious kind of "stable disequilibrium" in Egypt. Let me explain what I mean by this, first by specifying what does *not* seem to be happening. By and large, what is not going on in rural Egypt are the outcomes which worried both Amin (1974) and Todaro (1976): namely that rural–urban migration represents a "gift" of labor and human capital from the impoverished rural areas to the rich urban centers without any compensating flow (Amin); or that internal migration entails a social cost in the form of reduced output in rural areas and increased unemployment in the urban areas (Todaro). But if the "vicious circle" of rural impoverishment and cumulative causation of spatial inequality does not seem to happen, neither too does the "virtuous circle" of the pure neo-classical economists, whereby rural–urban migration equalizes inequalities in labor supply and wage levels, with remittances and returnees redeployed to a long-term productive transformation of the Upper Egyptian sending areas (e.g. Griffin, 1976; Lucas, 1997 for overviews of these mechanisms). What seems to be happening is a kind of "half-way-house" between these two theoretical outcomes. Migrants are indeed a notional surplus labor source in rural areas, and their opportunity costs of migrating are indeed low (since they can only find very limited work at very low wages in the countryside). Their access to, and guarantees of, reasonably paid work in Cairo are by no means assured, but by using kinship, village or area-based networks they are able to

get scraps of urban work, which may or may not improve and become more regular over time. Because this work is heavily constrained within a certain niche of the segmented labor market of Cairo (that to do with manual construction labor and other casual, unskilled jobs), and because this work is rejected by Cairo-born workers, migrants' socio-economic integration and hence their "personal transformation", are extremely limited in Cairo. Therefore they remain economically, socially and culturally oriented to their home places, which they visit often, remit heavily to, and hope to return to permanently eventually. However, because of their poor initial socio-economic status and their lack of alternative sources of income (e.g. that deriving from a good-sized farm or another small enterprise), and because of the rather meager wages they are able to earn in Cairo, their remitted and saved capital is rarely on a scale to be able to do more than keep their family going, perhaps with some improved material quality of life (better or bigger rural accommodation, a few consumer goods such as a TV etc.). Hence their inability to provide a major exogenous stimulus to the economic development of Upper Egypt, so that migration (or circulation) can be conceived as "an adaptive process whose major objective is maintaining the dynamic equilibrium of a social organization with a minimum of changes and at the same time providing (some) members ways to overcome their deprivations" (Mangalan, 1968: 14).

9.2.4 Socio-demographic effects of migration

The socio-demographic effects of migration are various. Amongst these effects – in the Egyptian case – are the migrants' exposure to urban behavior, norms, and traditions; women's empowerment and involvement in economic activities as a result of husbands' absence through migration; change in fertility levels and attitudes; and shifts in valuing children's education and participation in labor force.

Migrants have generally been held to contribute to changes in group values toward migration. In the words of Skeldon (1990), "The gradual shift in attitudes is molded by accumulated information and increased awareness of the world outside the village. Tales of life in the major cities brought back by relatives and friends and photographs showing scenes of urban living decorating the walls of rural homes all help to inform village populations of conditions in other parts of the country." In the era of mass media and the arrival of TV sets in Upper Egypt, live stories play a prime role in sketching the

picture of Cairo. As I mentioned before, most migrants were attracted to migrate by stories from older migrants. Nevertheless, the empirical findings of this study have on the whole showed that the effect of migrants' exposure to urban patterns and lifestyles was not strong in changing their traditional way of life and attitudes, and in a few cases it was even negative, reinforcing their rural conservative values as an antidote to the "evil" city.

Upper Egyptian migrants in Cairo live in relative isolation, as has been pointed out many times. They do not have channels to communicate with the local population, except formal work relations. Migrants tend to live in groups from the same village or group of adjacent villages, which of course contributes to their intentional isolation. This isolation is a natural reaction that reflects their failure to comply with the general styles of urban life from their side. On the other side, it is a means to keep their own identity, norms, and traditions; a kind of micro-scale parallel to the anti-globalization movements in the developing countries. Another psychological factor that contributes to this self-isolation is the Upper Egyptian migrants' perception that they are less educated and work in low-status jobs in Cairo and that Cairo folk look down on them.

It has been well established in the literature that the labor migration of husbands has many effects on the family in rural areas (for early yet comprehensive statements on this see Gonzales, 1961; Nelson, 1976). Research in Arab countries (Brink, 1991; Dawood, 1978; Khattab and El-Daeif, 1982; Morsy, 1985; Nawar and Mostafa, 1990; Taylor, 1984) suggests that women's status within the family increases when their husbands migrate to look for work. Cases are cited of women becoming more active in farming, wage labor, dealing with government agencies, and generally taking over the husbands' roles as family decision-maker and disciplinarian. In my village visits in Upper Egypt and my interviews and discussions with migrants' families, I noticed that women's status and cooperation in work have indeed increased, as I mentioned in more detail in earlier chapters. Nevertheless, it has to be stressed that there are limits to this process of female empowerment. Egypt has an established tradition of inegalitarian sex roles, and the superiority of the husband and father is reinforced in various ways. For instance, in Egyptian family law, which is based on Islamic law, the husband's legal and economic dominance over his wife is clearly recognized (White, 1978). On a practical level, too, the Egyptian family system sharply defines gender roles, and

women are reluctant to take over all the functions of the absent migrant husband. Brink (1991) found that village women whose husbands were away were uncomfortable about dealing with banks and with construction laborers who were working on their houses, and also felt inadequate when disciplining their children. Further problems could arise, one imagines, about renegotiation of respective roles when the husband returns. These are themes that could have been explored more in-depth had longer time been spent doing fieldwork in rural areas – although my status as a man would have certainly hindered me getting full (or even partial) access to the female perspective.

The effect of migration on fertility and family planning was found to be virtually nil. Migrants' families have higher fertility rates and lower contraceptive prevalence rates than their rural counterparts. These findings can be explained in the light of four facts, all noted earlier. The first is that the rural Upper Egyptian families represented in my survey are not a random sample of their region; they have lower socio-economic characteristics than the average, which may explain – in part – why they have a higher fertility level than the average for the region. The second factor that affects fertility and family planning is the isolation of the Upper Egyptian laborers in the social geography of Cairo and their tendency not to be an active integrating social group in Cairo. This isolation has undoubtedly restricted their exposure to urban behavioral patterns and customs. Thirdly, the conventional demographic impacts of migration from the rural perspective seem not to have operated in the Egyptian case. Despite the logical expectation that the absence of male migrants from the village might adversely affect the reproduction rate, both by delaying marriage and by reducing the time that couples might stay together, my sample displayed higher than average fertility. Clearly married men returning home for short periods have been rather successful in impregnating their wives, although this is not to discount the possibility that fertility could have been even higher without migration. The fourth factor, which is more speculative, is that migrants' fertility is maintained at a high level because of the support created by extending the household resource base to the city. This is a controversial suggestion because it contravenes the general observation in LDCs that increased wealth leads to reduced fertility.

Regarding children's education, migrants' own harsh experiences have taught them that they do not want their children to suffer as they have done. This is a positive side of

migrants' experience in Cairo. With regard to migrants’ expectations about future family structures, it seems that the extended family pattern may last for at least one more generation in Upper Egypt. Most migrants anticipate that they will live with their children in the same house when they grow old. This attitude is related to the norms and the traditions that prevail in Upper Egypt, supported by the weakness of the social insurance system and the housing problems in rural Egypt due to the restrictions on building houses on agricultural land.

To sum up, the pattern of male migration has had many positive effects on the villages of Upper Egypt. It has raised women’s status by increasing their involvement in economic activities and by heading their families in the absence of the husbands. It has contributed to rural poverty alleviation and ensured a decent life for the migrants' families. And migration has changed migrants' attitudes positively towards their children's education. On the other hand, migration appears to have done nothing to diminish the still-high fertility levels in rural Upper Egypt. Hence my suggestion at the beginning of this study (see Chapter 1; 1.1) that rural–urban migration might be promoted as a policy strategy to help to bring about a decline in overall Egyptian fertility seems to have been misplaced. Further brief discussion on policy options follows immediately below.

9.3 Concluding the research: policy recommendations and future research avenues

9.3.1 Policy reflections

As an academic thesis, this study has not set out to have an explicit policy objective; nor, even less, is it an evaluative study of existing population and development policy. However, given the nature of the topic of the thesis, and its obvious connection to Egyptian regional development, a few reflections on policy implications are not out of place.

The relation between population movements and development is reciprocal. It is not only migration that affects development and contributes to modernization, but also development affects the nature and direction of migration streams and their magnitude.

In this respect, migration is part of the socio-economic development of any country. Considering both urban and rural areas as well as different regions in Egypt in formulating policies that affect internal migration and population redistribution is a must. To regard industrialization as the panacea of Egypt's development (as, for instance, stated in Beaumont *et al.*, 1976: 486) is no longer a credible policy stance. Nor is a strategy which seeks to resolve the problems of urbanization solely within the city's boundaries: indeed a one-dimensional approach to countering the ills of urban life by only improving the conditions of life in cities – for instance by building more homes, improving health and education facilities – may become self-defeating since rural–urban inequalities are widened and with it the stimulus to further migration (Dasgupta, 1981). Policies and plans should be formulated in order to achieve the more balanced structure that would enable residents in rural and non-metropolitan areas to get access to the benefits of socio-economic development. Rural poverty alleviation schemes will help to reduce the migration streams from rural to urban areas. They will help also to re-unite families whose historic pattern has been one of having the head of the family work in Cairo and leave the family in the village.

According to Dasgupta (1981: 56) an effective migration policy for a country like Egypt should be to ensure that migratory moves are:

- not driven by rural frustration and rural–urban inequality;
- directed towards a range of smaller and intermediate urban settlements and away from very large urban agglomerations;
- slowed down to a pace which avoids social and economic disruption, either in origin or destination; and
- shaped in such a way that migration does not have the effect of transferring a problem from one place to another.

Direct and forced measures of influencing internal migration should not be used. They are against Egyptian law and human rights. Rural development is among the key policy options that may contribute to the reduction of the potential flow of rural labor to urban areas. Rural development includes the following types of interventions:

- Rural industrialization and establishing small-scale, labor-intensive industries.
- Developing micro-credit schemes and participatory funding of labor-intensive activities and especially handicrafts.
- Supporting the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in their developing of training schemes for the surplus population of agriculture.
- Control of population growth in order to reduce the pressure on public services and to slow down the unemployment rates in the future.

Parallel to the rural development approach is the need to promote potential internal migration destinations, such as Toshka and the other new developments outlined in this thesis, and to explain to the public more effectively the potentials of these new areas with respect to job opportunities, living conditions, services and facilities.

Due to the current economic situation in Egypt and the over-population pressures on public expenditure and the high levels of unemployment in both urban and rural districts, I see that the government of Egypt is not capable in the short run to go for a massive rural poverty alleviation strategy. However, the second option in Dasgupta's listing, which is the promotion of potential alternative internal migration destinations, is more feasible. The private sector and multinational companies, besides the government, have managed to establish new communities that can absorb part of the surplus of the agricultural sector. This promotion of new urban development outside of the heavily-urbanized Nile Delta region will help to diffuse and decentralize internal migration patterns away from the main metropolitan destinations.

With respect to the future national research agenda of population studies in Egypt, it is clear that in the last two to three decades migration research was an almost missing aspect of demographic research. The study of the other two factors of population growth, fertility and mortality, gained the great proportion of research interests and funding by population scholars, sociologists and demographers. The funding priorities of the international donors directed most of the funds towards research on family planning, fertility, infant and child morbidity and mortality, and reproductive health. Population geographers' and sociologists' potential contributions to research on internal migration were neglected. After releasing the data of each population census,

demographers have produced a few research papers that skim over the internal migration issue and deal with it mathematically rather than in-depth. As is well-known, the census data on rural–urban migration usually underestimate the real volume of movement (Skeldon, 1990), so that the summary findings of demographic research do not reflect the real nature and scale of rural–urban migration in Egypt.

9.3.2 Strengths, weaknesses, and future research

It is appropriate in the final paragraphs of a thesis for the author to identify in summary form the strengths and weaknesses of the research executed and, from that, sketch out some points for further research.

I regard the main achievement of this thesis to be its empirical core of detailed and original data collected on the migration profiles of a sample of 242 rural–urban labor migrants whom I surveyed in Cairo, supplemented by 20 recorded interviews of another set of Upper Egyptian migrant laborers, and the more observational fieldwork done in some villages of origin. Together, these field data enabled me to answer, to a greater or lesser extent, the research questions set out at the beginning of the thesis. Specifically I have:

- described the basic socio-demographic characteristics of the migrants – young adult males from poor material and educational backgrounds;
- identified their motives for migrating – overwhelmingly to find work and income opportunities;
- described the means and mechanisms of their migration – they are a form of "labor circulation" or "shuttle migration" moving back and forth between their villages and Cairo over a period of many years, and heavily reliant on village-based social networks of various kinds to facilitate this process;
- documented their working lives in Cairo – as casual laborers in a variety of jobs mainly related to the construction sector, these jobs being physically tough and with a rather high risk of injury;

- provided detailed insights into earnings, costs of living and savings – their incomes are low, but nevertheless at least twice what they can earn in the village, and they save about half of what they earn;
- described their living conditions in Cairo, with special reference to housing and diet – the former overcrowded and insanitary, the latter meager;
- investigated their socio-demographic behavior and attitudes – finding that migrants are socially conservative in their demographic behavior, holding to high rates of fertility and low contraceptive use, and also to conservative views as regards gender relations and upbringing of sons and daughters;
- provided fairly detailed information on remittances and their deployment in villages of origin – mainly they are used for "survival" or "consumption" (food, clothing, children's education, housing, consumer goods) with little left over for "productive investment" in farming or rural industries;
- described migrants' plans for their future – generally to return eventually to the village, but with somewhat unrealistic hopes of secure jobs there, and with patchy knowledge of national development projects which might offer them alternative migration and livelihood possibilities.

A number of comparative perspectives were built into my answers to and analysis of these research questions. These included:

- comparison of the migrants' living and working conditions in Cairo and in the places of rural origin;
- comparison of migrants and the non-migrants in the villages of origin;
- comparison of migrants with non-migrants of similar socio-educational backgrounds in Cairo.

The first of these was straightforward, since it concerned asking questions in the questionnaire to the same sample. Regarding the second and third of these comparative perspectives, my research time and scope did not allow me to set up formal control samples. Instead I used existing panel data from Egyptian survey sources. This limited the strength and rigor of the comparisons somewhat, but yielded sufficient data to enable some useful comparative perspectives to emerge.

Perhaps the greatest limitation to my study in its comparative dimension – and this is a constraint that I have repeatedly acknowledged at various points in the foregoing analysis – is its narrowly drawn sample. The “self-selectivity” of this sample as based almost entirely on poor rural-origin migrants engaged in casual labor in Cairo makes it difficult if not impossible to generalize about overall Egyptian rural–urban migration. This affected, to varying extents, my ability to answer convincingly all of my research questions. It also opens up a further comparative dimension which should have been built into the research design had time and resources allowed: this is the comparison between the mainly “circulation migrants” whom I surveyed and other categories of migrants in Cairo, notably those older-established and permanently-settled migrants who originate in many cases from the same regions of the country as “my” migrants. Practical limitations of time and resources prevented this comparative dimension being explored. I was also aware of the safety dimension: some of the slum suburbs (including the cemetery areas) are not really safe to venture into if someone does not have friends and contacts amongst those local inhabitants.

Where I experienced more of a philosophical dilemma in the research process was how far to extend the research focus in three epistemological directions: to theory; to comparisons with the literature on rural–urban migrations in other parts of the world; and to policy. Throughout the thesis I experienced unease about how far to push the analysis along each of these dimensions. Whilst on the one hand I was made constantly aware of the need to explore these aspects more thoroughly; on the other hand constrictions of time, length of the written product (the thesis), and coherence of the final narrative held me back.

Hopefully the theoretical framing of the analysis has been a sufficiently present part of the final account: foregrounded in some detail in the lengthy Chapter 3, touched on from time to time in the empirical results chapters (5–8), and revived for a concluding analysis in Chapter 9. It would be tedious at this stage to repeat all these theoretical contextualizations, since they have been dealt with already earlier in this concluding chapter. Very briefly, then, elements of Ravenstein’s laws of migration, “push–pull” theory, the Gravity Model, dual-sector and segmentation theory, systems analysis,

social networks, and both neoclassical economics and "new economics of migration" theories were all found to be more or less relevant to my analysis. I made particular use of the Mabogunje systems model of rural–urban migration; and I used the Todaro model, too, as a frequent theoretical sounding-board, although not always, I must admit, to good effect. More productive theoretical and conceptual references were those I made to the "home economics" approach, "survival migration", and the vexed definitional issue of "migration" versus "circulation".

My comparative references to the literature on rural–urban and internal migration could undoubtedly have been more extensive. I tended to respond to the problem of the vastness and dispersion of this literature by being selective in my choice of case studies to reference – mainly, but not exclusively, referring to the comparative work carried out in Africa and the Middle East, and relying on the useful but over-theoretically focused (for my purposes) review of writers such as Stark (1978, 1991) and Lucas (1997, 1998).

On the policy front, I have been even more restrictive. Whilst recognizing at the outset the potential policy relevance of this research, I also do not claim that this is a primarily policy-focused piece of work – hence the rather brief concluding comments in the previous subsection of this chapter.

As for further research questions and avenues, I suggest the following. Some of these are obvious extensions to the work I have done in this thesis, others derive partly from weaknesses in coverage or logic in the above account.

The first area for further research I would nominate, is to widen the focus of outmigration from Upper Egypt to other groups apart from low-status rural laborers. I mentioned already my concern that the self-definition of the migrant sample treated here has tended to limit the scope of some of the conclusions that can be drawn about the totality of migration from Upper to Lower Egypt. A wider sample, perhaps drawn on the basis of a stratification of settlements and social and landowning classes in the region of migrant origin, would enable a more comprehensive picture of internal migration in Egypt to be achieved. Widening the focus in this way, to include those who moved for study purposes and other reasons, would also probably reveal other

processes of more complete integration into the social and economic life of the city than the social marginalization of the labor migrants I have studied.

Second, more attention could be paid to international migration from Upper Egypt, and to the interactions between internal and international migration. My data are only partial on this, “capturing” migrants in Cairo who have been abroad, but “losing” those who are now abroad after first migrating internally. Although I provided some comparative indications, based on my village fieldwork, of the larger volume of savings that normally accrue from external migration compared to internal migration, more precise comparative data could be surely gathered on this – following the example of the interesting comparative study of Mexican migrants carried out by Lazano-Ascencio *et al*. (1999).

Third, I feel that further analysis of the role of social networks and social fields in Egyptian rural–urban migration would be beneficial. The nature of my questionnaire, and the relatively limiting supporting nature of my qualitative fieldwork, meant that the data I gathered on the role of social networks was useful and indicative, but not in-depth. As I briefly touched on in my theoretical review in Chapter 3, research on social networks has been an importantly growing agenda in studies of international migration and transnational communities; but they have an equally powerful potential to inform the nature of the internal migration process (Skeldon, 1990: 132). This approach would imply a more even division of field research between the urban and the rural context than I made in this investigation, which was mainly concentrated on the urban destination.

Fourth, more scope exists for a detailed examination of the precise conditions of outmigration from the source areas. Exactly what (and who) determines who should move, when, and for how long? How are inter-district and inter-village contrasts in outmigration to be documented and explained? Inspiration here derives from the classic account by J. Clyde Mitchell (1969) which distinguished the *rate* of migration (dependent on macro-economic and other structural factors) and the *incidence* of migration (which individuals, precisely, move and their migration profiles in time and space). What, furthermore, is the role of *family*-based migration discussions and strategies on migration behavior? (This last question links both to the social networks

approach mentioned above, and to the need for more gender-sensitivity, which is my next point). Once again, this implies more concentrated field research from the origin-area perspective.

Fifth, I acknowledge the need for more attention to be given to the gender dimensions of Egyptian migration. Brink (1991) has begun to do this, but her perspective is as female-biased as mine is male-biased, given that she interviewed only women, and I only male migrants (though I did talk to some women in my village fieldwork). But the whole field of gender dynamics in migration needs further exploration: What role (if any) do women (mothers, wives, sisters etc.) have in formulating the decision of male members to migrate? What views do women have about their own potential/denied migration, or about reuniting with their husbands in Cairo? What hardships do women suffer as a result of men's migration? (Brink suggests these are not as great as might be supposed). What are women's views about the extra responsibilities they are asked to shoulder as a result of the absence of their men? And what views do they have about the future of their families, households, numbers of children etc?

Finally, some bigger questions deserve attention on the part of future researchers. The first is the comparative dimension, especially within North Africa and the Middle East. Both Todaro (1976), some time ago, and Lucas (1998) more recently, have entered pleas for more comparative research on internal migration in less developed countries based on more rigorously standardized data and research criteria than hitherto; whilst Shami (1994: 4) has drawn attention to the fact that the Middle East "remains much neglected and understudied, and thus contributes little to comparative theory" in the field of migration and population development.

Another major question is to deepen understanding of population mobility on the one hand, and modernization and development on the other. Shami (1994: 9) maintains that "dislocation is increasingly seen as a precondition of modernity" (let alone postmodernity); yet which types of mobility are "good" and which are "bad" for the Egyptian "modernity"? The answer to whether too much labor is being transferred to the urban sector from rural areas of Egypt is far from clear-cut. It would appear that the "skimming off" of a quota of excess rural labor from Upper Egypt to supply the construction sector in Cairo has its economic functionality, but at what cost in human

and psychological terms? And what are the long-term effects on the Egyptian economy, especially the rural economy?

And finally what is the “bigger picture” as regards the relationship between migration and demographic trends? Kubat (1976: 19–20) makes the point that too many studies of African migration treat lightly the problem of the wider demographic context. My results were, in one sense, inconclusive on this point, due largely to the migrant laborers’ continuing rural orientation and mentality. But this inconclusiveness raises other questions, about other migration strategies which might have a more profound demographic impact – permanent family-based rural–urban migration, or external migration, might depress fertility more effectively. Or should a policy of rural modernization and diversification be employed in order to be able to reallocate rural labor resources more efficiently in the Egyptian countryside? And what fertility implications might this have, given that fertility decline assessments for Egypt (and for the North African region as a whole – see Sutton, 1999) have been increasingly optimistic in recent years?