

قرى الوادى. التركيبة المتوازنة



VILLAGES IN THE NILE VALLEY

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VILLAGES IN THE NILE VALLEY

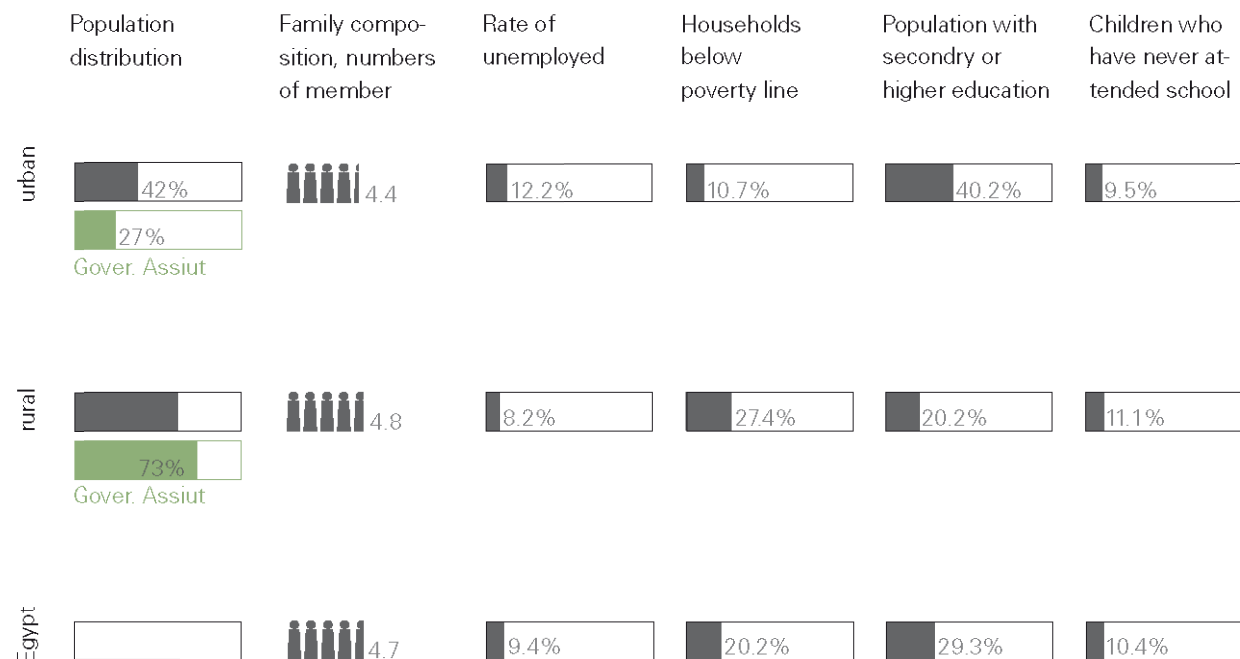
A STABLE CONSTELLATION

Rural settlements constitute a substantial part of the Nile Valley and Delta landscape, housing half of the Egyptian population. The area covered by settlements is constantly increasing, putting pressure on remaining agricultural land. The distance between agglomerations are decreasing as connections are enhanced. This network of settlements is a stable fundament of the urban fabric, feeding cities with a labor force receiving commodities in return. The research maps three villages in the Nile Valley to understand their internal metabolism, and how they relate to each other and the larger context.



THE PEASANT AND THE FAMILY

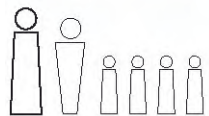
The peasant, dressed in his “galabeya,” a long tunic, is the typical figure of the rural settlement in the Nile Valley. Originally the peasant worked as a farmer, or a “fallah”. He and his family lived off the land he cultivated. Currently, the peasant family is engaged in a dispersed range of various activities in order to manage its livelihood. Agricultural production alone is not enough to support the rural population anymore. The peasant is changing; today he is a teacher, tradesman, factory worker, hotel porter, office employee, café owner, construction worker, carpenter or petty trader, and he has seen the world, and traveled abroad to work at a construction site or in a factory in Middle Eastern and North African countries (MENA). Agricultural production remains the most important generator of subsistence, and is the directing force of peasant life of the Nile valley. The peasant family forms the smallest economic unit in the village.



Urban-Rural Demography of Egypt

source: CAPMAS Population, Housing and Establishments
Census 2006





Hasanin 'Okasha', 38

Primary school teacher, fallah and phone card salesman
"Life is better here than in Assiut"
"The main problems of El Fayama are bad education quality and the high built density"

The Family House

Marriage constitutes the most important event in the life of an Egyptian peasant. The physical representation of the event is the construction of an extension or an all-new house for the new nuclear family. This is one of the most important factors of the social stability because it represents the realization of the peasant families merging together. In many cases, the new nuclear family stays in the house of the husband's father where an apartment or room extension is prepared for the couple.



Hasanen with four of his children. Hasanen's sister also lives with the family. This nuclear family is otherwise an exception on the street where all the other families are a part of an extended family.



The Heart of the House

The patio is an area where all the daily activities are carried out. The women prepare food and bake bread in a mud oven, as well as wash and dry laundry.

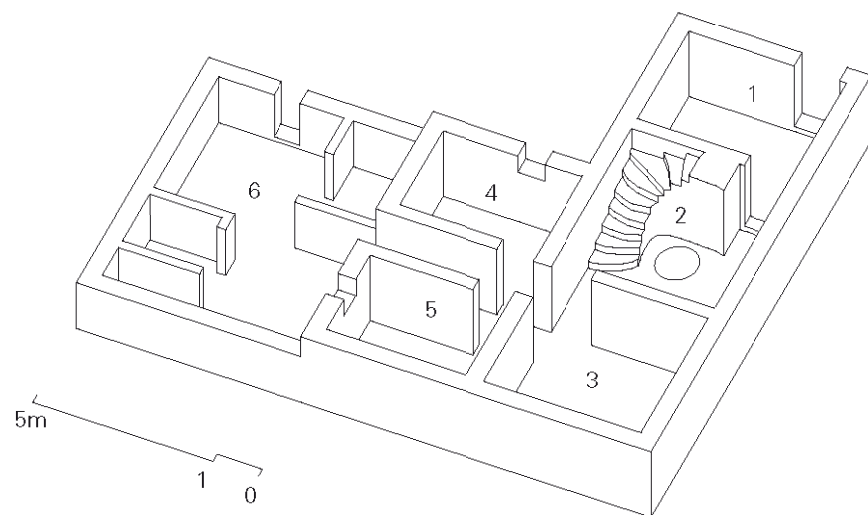
Cohabitation

The animal courtyard is the largest open space. Animals are an important resource for the family, as they are used for transport as well as a secure source of food.



Mandara: Receiving Room

The "mandara" is a sign of hospitality for the guest and a representation of the family. Usually quite simple, with painted walls, and tiled floor, the room is furnished with benches along the walls, a small table and a TV. Here the guests are welcomed in the social space of the house.



Hasanin 'Okasha's House

- 1. Receiving room
- 2. Patio
- 3. Kitchen
- 4. Parents room
- 5. Children's room
- 6. Animals courtyard



Ahmed Sayed, 28

Salesman for a telecommunications company in Assiut
His family lives in the center of El Fayma, but they have no land so Ahmed bought some agricultural land on the outskirts to build a house for his future family.

“I built this house with my brothers. The village expert helped us to define the structure”

“With a big fire we prepared 5000 bricks, but we had to do it on holidays because it is illegal”

Building a New House

The traditional typology or function of the rural house has not changed much, it is the manifestation of the family’s needs. One noticeable change is the construction material. Regardless of what the laws say, most homes are built with mud bricks produced on-site by the peasant himself, using valuable agricultural soil. The load bearing parts are most often reinforced concrete, allowing future expansion.



Traditional Materials

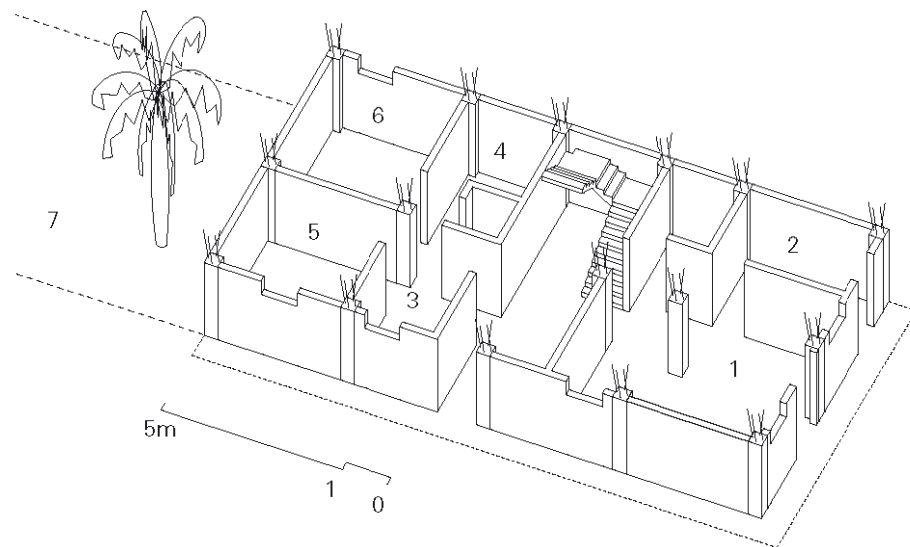
Construction materials are handmade and come directly from nature. Palm tree beams support mud brick walls. Old houses in the village center are often partly degenerated.



New Materials

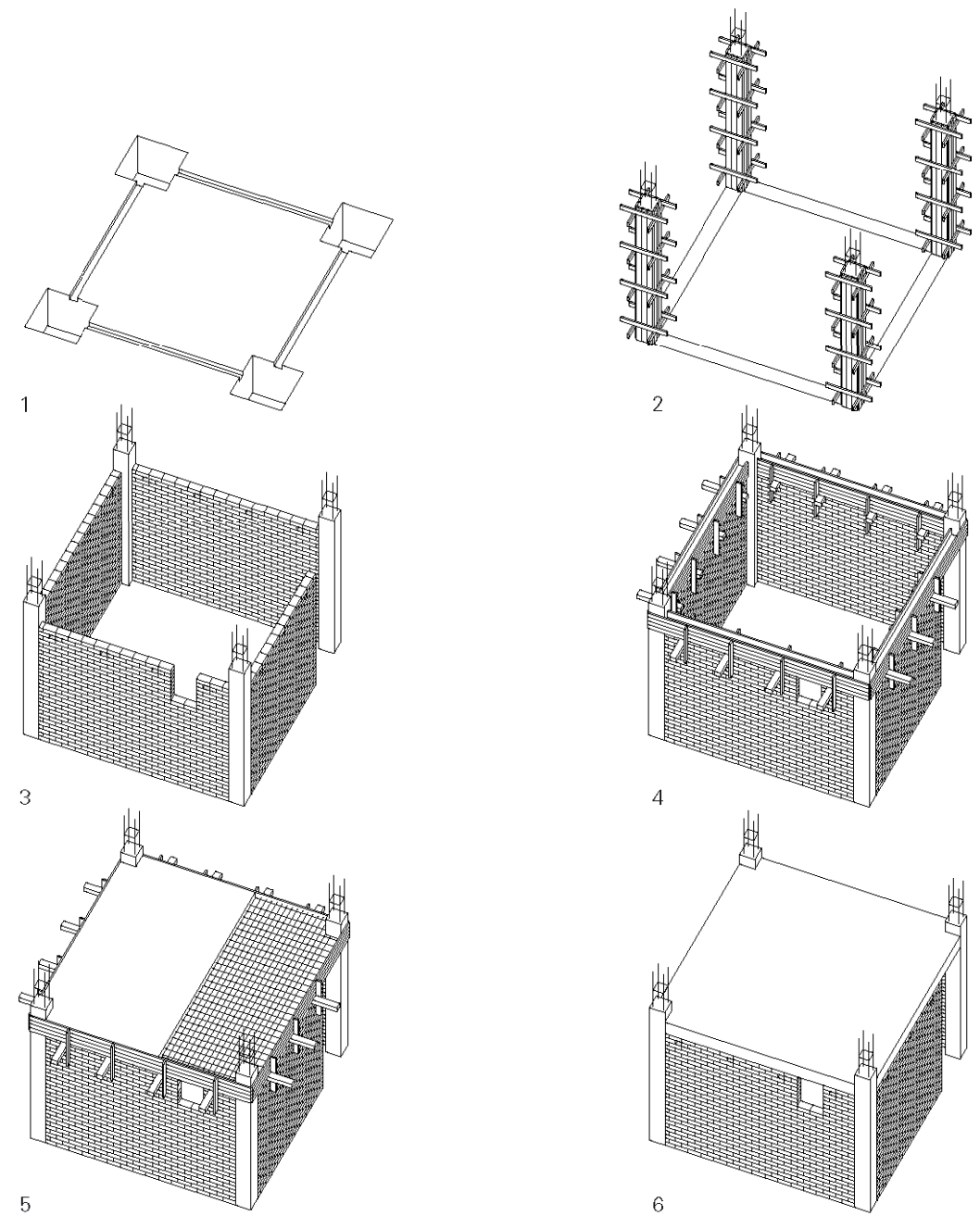
New construction materials are industrial products that come from Assiut or the Delta. Materials like steel, concrete and industrial bricks, allow for speedy construction.





Ahmed Sayed's House

- 1. Receiving room
- 2. Future shop
- 3. Storage
- 4. Kitchen
- 5. Children's room
- 6. Parents room
- 7. Field



Building Process

- 1. Foundation
- 2. Pillars, arming - caisson - concrete laid
- 3. Walls, bricks prepared - bricks laid
- 4. Beams, arming - caisson - concrete laid
- 5. Floor, caisson - arming - concrete laid
- 6. Finished, ready for future extension

THE EXTENDED FAMILY

The extended family represents the principal socioeconomical unit of the rural settlement. Multigeneration-families usually live in a compact unit of houses. Traditionally, this agglomeration of nuclear family houses are disposed along a narrow street that has a semi-private character. The extended family works like a small community in itself where all members collaborate to maintain the dynasty of the whole group. New generations remain in the villages, but given today's situation with heavily overpopulated villages, they, in most cases, are forced to build their new house detached from the original street, in the outskirts of the village on agricultural land.



Reda el Hakayma, her daughter-in-law, and grandchild

Farmer and migrant wife

The extended family live all in the street Abu El-Qasim.

"In El Fayma there are not enough services, for example the health center does not have enough drugs"

"Families don't move from El Fayma, and no new families come here."

Stable Instability

The family is the smallest functional unit in the Nile Valley network of settlements. With its members engaged in a variety of activities, the risks and vulnerability of the economy at large, are dispersed and thus low. The family can therefore also support individuals and hence allow for the specific work flexibility that is characteristic for agriculturally-based economies of the villages.



Traditional Family Street

Older houses are being replaced by new constructions with more levels for the growing family.



New Generations

The construction of new, large houses on agricultural land is common even though it is illegal in most cases.



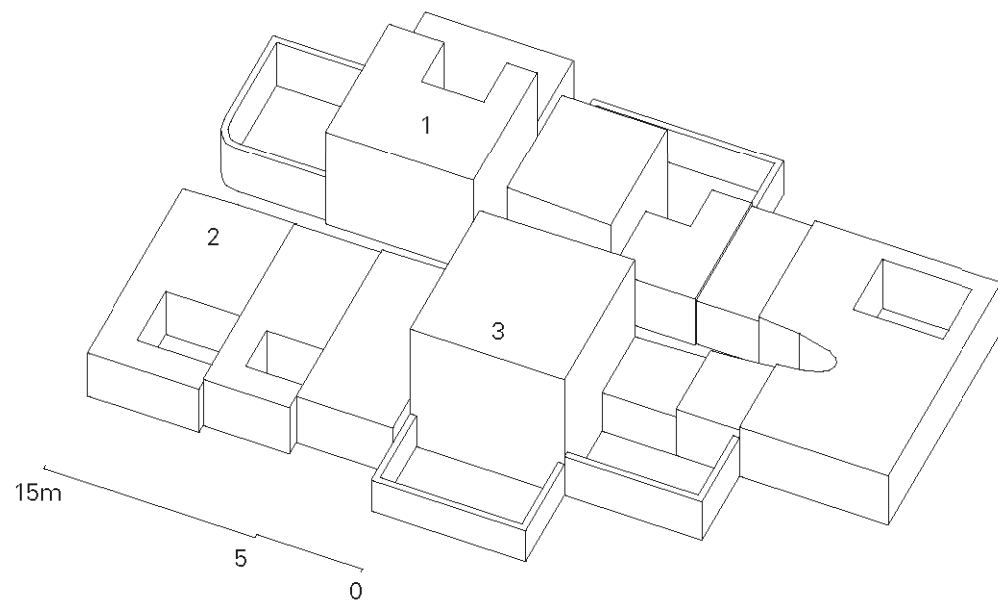
Community Life

High density becomes more obvious along the newer streets where houses already begin with two to three levels. The narrow street functions as a common semi-private space perfect for children's games and chit-chats.



Petty Trade

Many families engage in trading as a means of making extra money. However, several families trade goods internally within the extended family, Shops are located in the house directly to the street.



Family Street

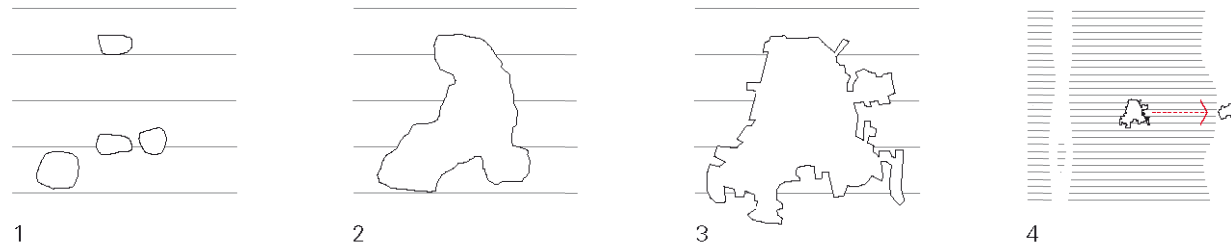
- 1. Traditional house
- 2. Shop
- 3. New family's house/extension

Community Life

In the family everything is shared; the house is built together just as the bread is baked together.

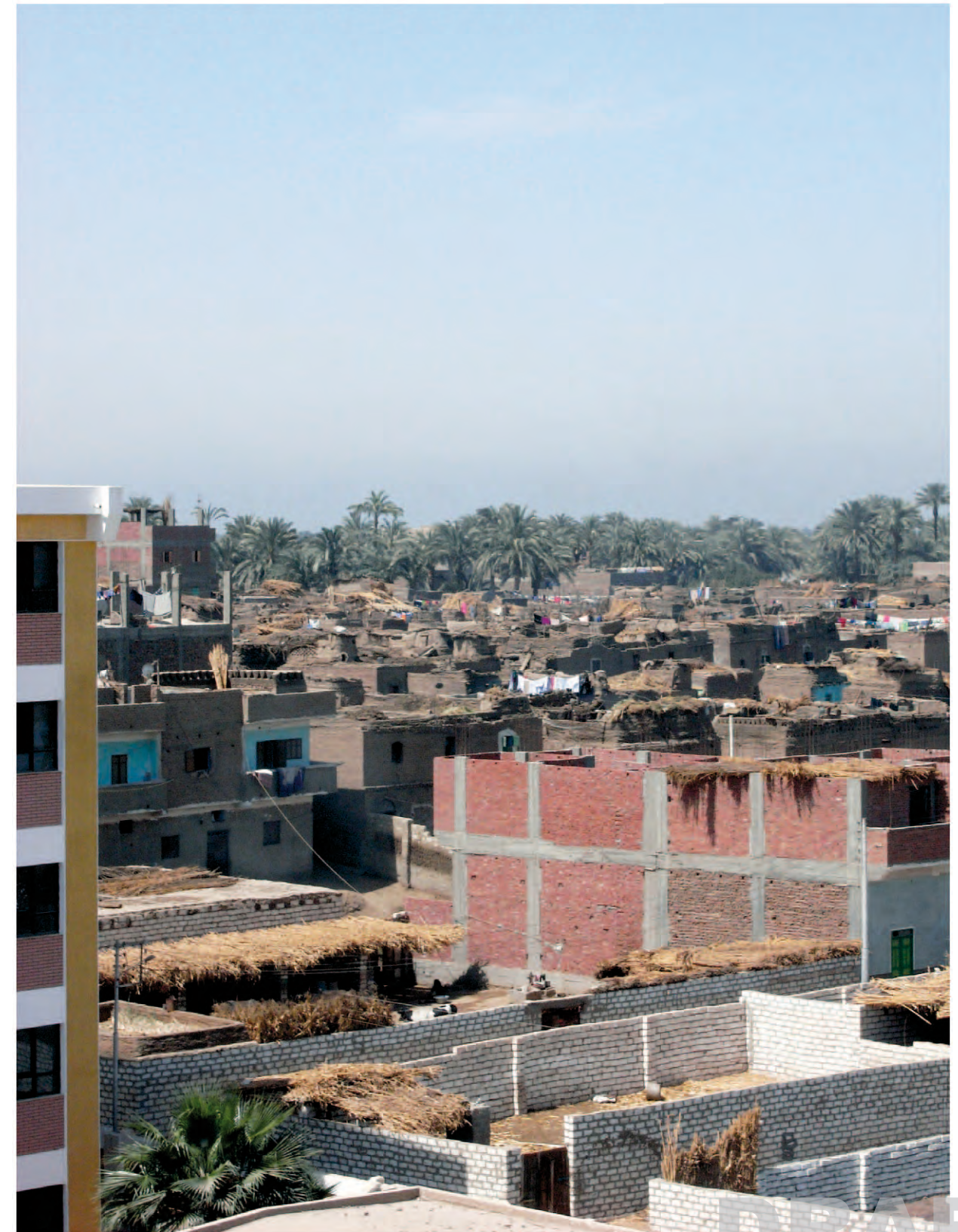
THE VILLAGE

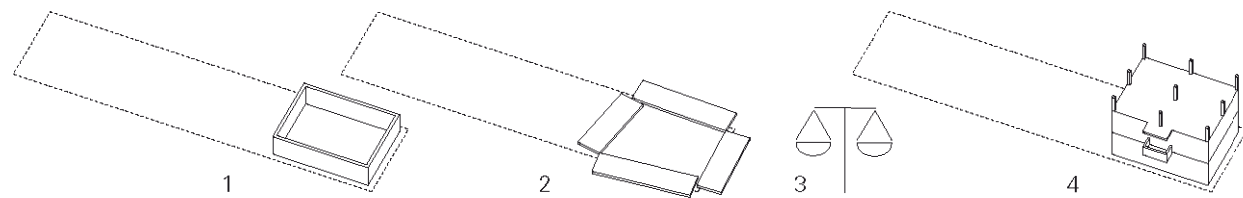
The village is the main form of urbanisation along the Nile. Most villages are closely connected with their surroundings but maintain their introverted character. All the village are provided with facilities like water and electricity and institutions like schools and religious communities. The villages are located in land serviced by water via canals or wells. Since the very beginning, Egyptian villages have distinguished their own lifestyle, social structure and the relations between the individuals through close participation and cooperation in all different activities of life.



Evolution

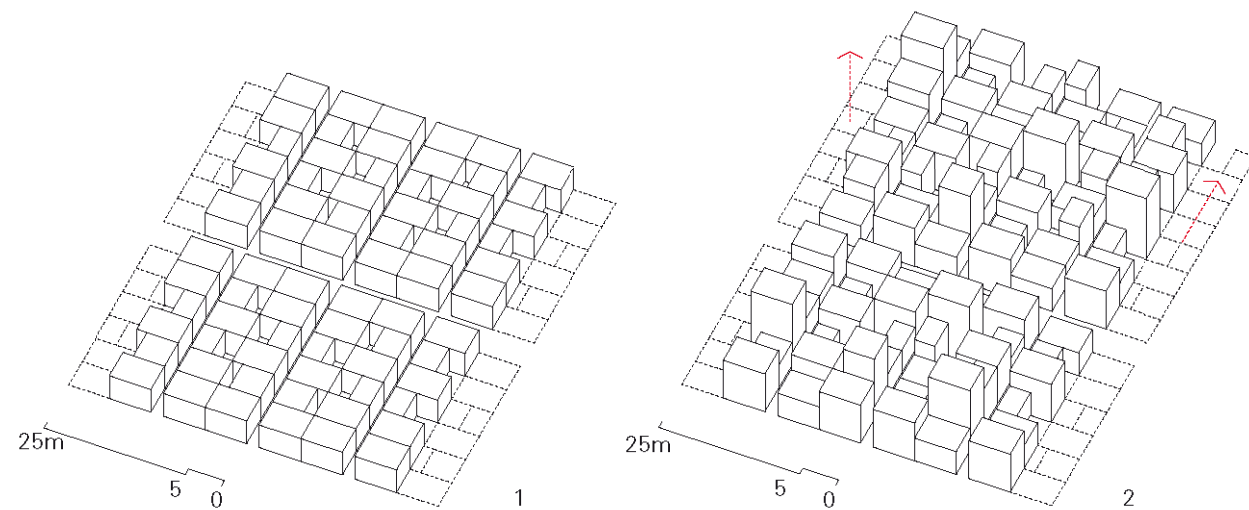
1. Origins: Villages were pre-disposed to the highland, where houses were protected from annual Nile flooding.
2. Expansion: Population increase in the last 50 years has lead to an informal expansion onto surrounding agricultural land so that some villages grew together into each other. (With the planning program of 1986 the government fixed a village border to preseve arable land.)
3. Informal growth: The village border fails to halt expansion. Buildings are legalized through a formalization process. A new border fixes a new limit of the village till 2022.
4. Sister village: The government's "sister village" program along valley edges aims to enlarge urbanized desert areas.





Building Formalization

1. Temporary light building: The first step proceeds with fast construction of bricks walls without cement. The goal is to capture the attention of governorate authorities.
2. Demolition of the walls: The governorate intervenes with the demolition of the light construction.
3. Court: The owner addresses the court and with the private ownership protection clause, wins the case.
4. New permanent building: The owner is legally allowed to build a house on the land.



Vertical and Horizontal Growth

The original village structure (1) is composed of 1-2 floor houses that define parallel family streets along the main street. The family expansion brings a densification of the existing pattern (2) with 3-6 floor buildings and an expansion on precious agricultural land.



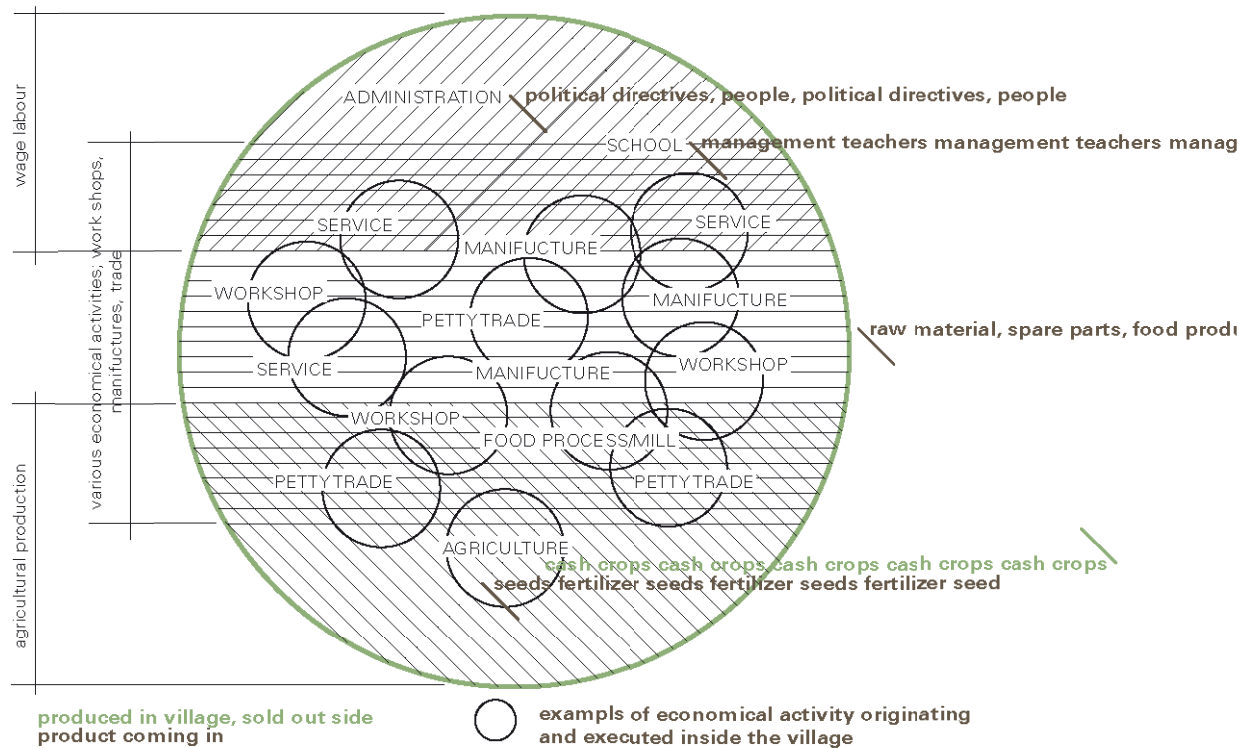
Toward Formalization

Natural family growth is directly related to the formalization of illegal buildings.



New Buildings

The expansion follows the parceled structure. Land is intensely exploited between agriculture and housing.

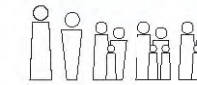


Economic Activities in the Village

An illustration showing an estimation of the division and distribution of economic activities.

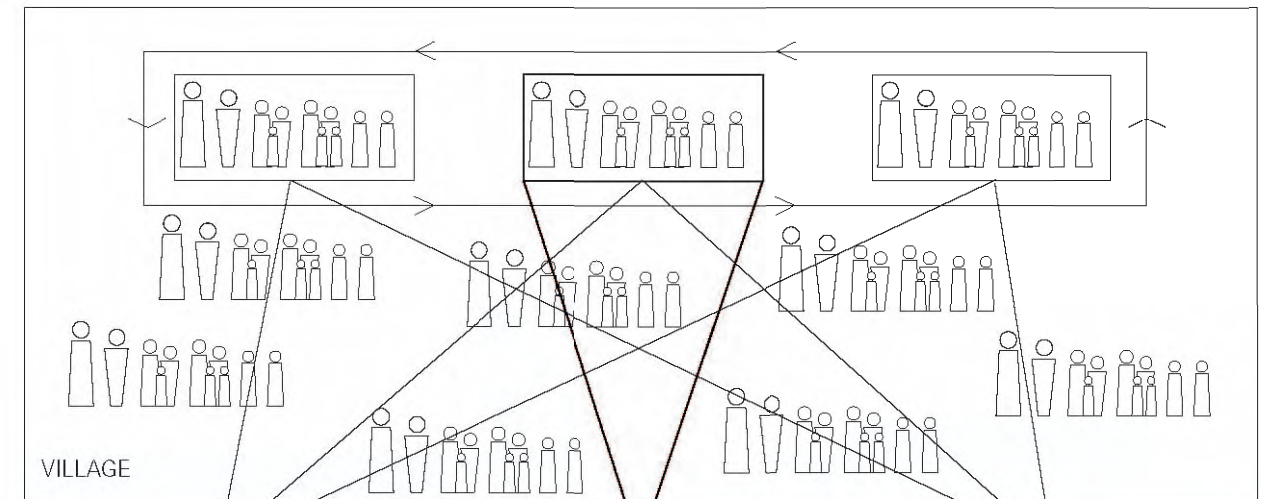
Actors and Activities

The village is in most cases under the control of one or few powerful and rich families. The “Omda” (mayor) of the village is elected or chosen from one of these families. The 'Omda is the traditional figure; close to people, he knows all the inhabitants and plays an important social role. While the election of the 'Omda is a public, official election, in reality it is more or less a decision made by a select few. These families most often control and own major economical activities or institutions, such as the mill, in the village. It is also common that a larger part of the agricultural land belonging to the village is owned by a few and then rented out, legally or illegally, thus increasing their economic and social power. Other important internal actors include religious representatives. Just as the family unit is subsistence-producing, the village also include a lot of everyday services and produce the everyday goods needed. But this changes and differs between families, and between villages. The village economy is based on the surplus from the agricultural production, but there has been a major shift towards a wage labor dependent economy. Since few production or service jobs are generated in the villages, these jobs must be searched for outside. The informal or self-producing economy is large, however, and produces economic activities inside the village, contributing to self-sufficiency when it comes to services like smaller production/repair workshops, food processing, and social activities (café).



Ibrahim Sayed, 63

'Omda in El Fayma, land owner, mill owner
 “The big problem in Fayma is the density of construction.”
 “In the village council we speak with the farmers about many questions and problems”



Economical body



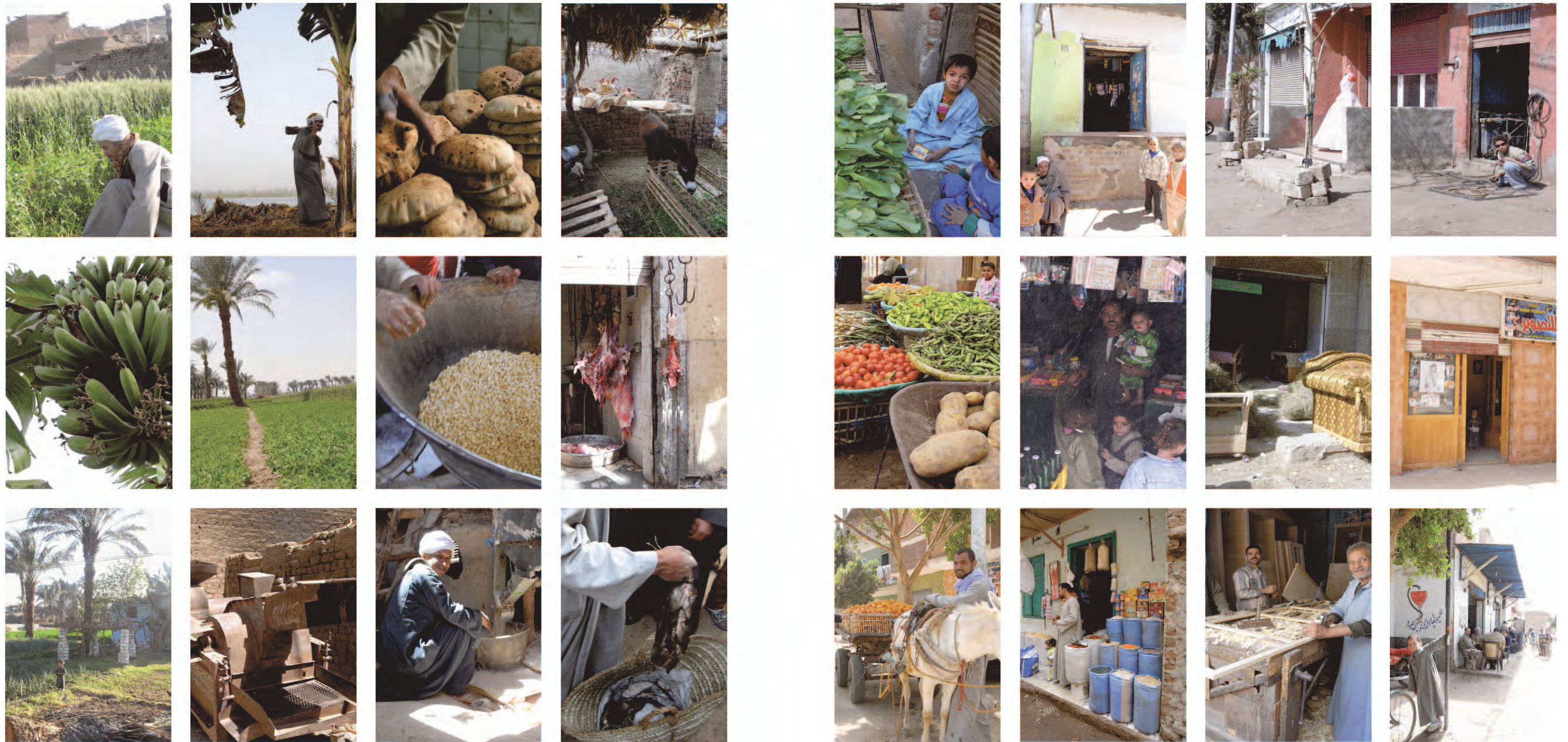
Political body



Administrational body

Power Structure in the Village

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 © ETH Studio Basel



A Variety of Activities

Agricultural production, food processing, vendors and petty trade, manufacturers, vendors and services are carried out in the villages and contribute to the village economy. The main source of income is not longer agricultural production of cash crops but wage labor outside the village



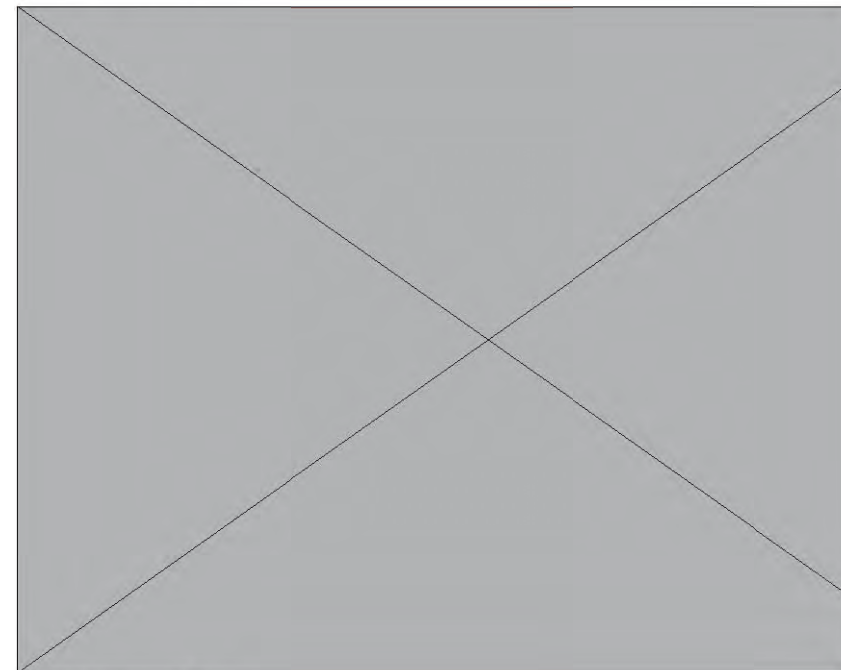
El Fayma, Ibrahim 'Abd al-'Ati

Three Villages

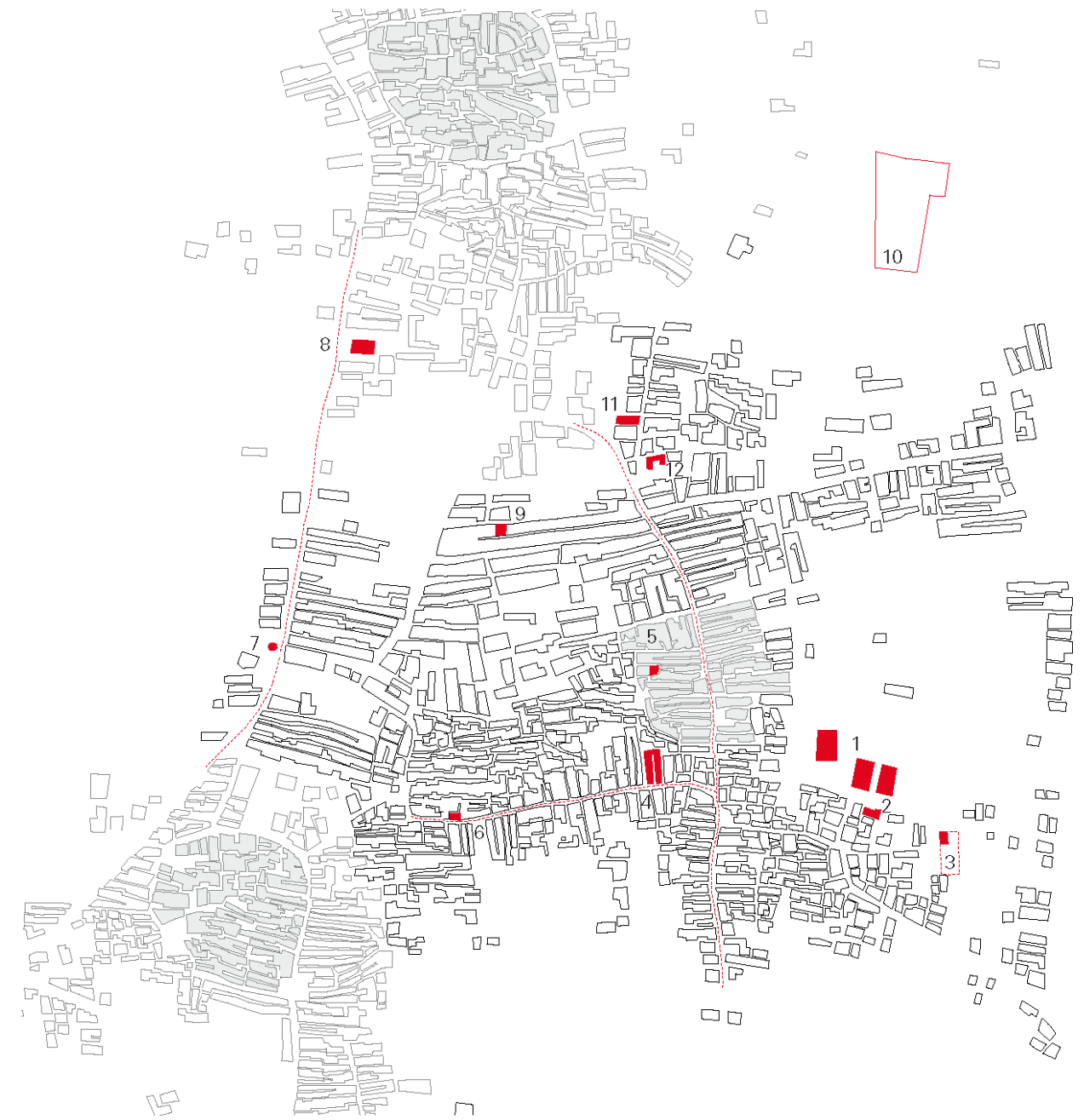
Representations of the visited villages.



El Wasta, Kamal Sayed

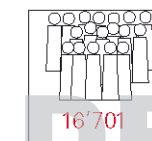
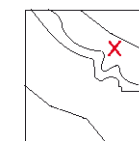


Durunka, Ahmed Rizq



1:5000

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Schools | 8. Health center |
| 2. Administration | 9. Reda El Hakayma's house |
| 3. Ahmed Sayed's property | 10. Reda family's field |
| 4. Traditional family street | 11. Tawfek Shahata Nassar |
| 5. Hasanen Okashaa's house | 12. Muslim center |
| 6. Ibrahim Sayed's house | □ Original settlement |
| 7. Water tower | ▨ Commercial street |



El Fayma

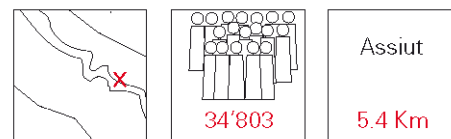
El Fayma is a typical rural Egyptian village. Located in the middle of the Nile valley, the village maintains some features from its original nature. Agriculture is the main economical activity, in fact more than half of the total labor force is involved in the farming sector.



1:5000

El Wasta

El Wasta is situated on the riverbanks of the Nile opposite to Assiut. This proximity to the river and the city influences the village. Intensive agriculture on the fertile island of El Wasta and fishing activity characterize the strong village economy. Since the construction of the bridge in 1996, the number of inhabitants has increased and the village changed from agricultural to an urban settlement. The urban village of El Wasta is developing services and infrastructure is creating good quality of life. These conditions attract people from Assiut to move to El Wasta.

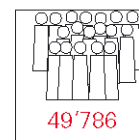




1:10 000

Durunka

Durunka is situated at the foot of the mountain chain along the edge of the valley, close to Assiut city. The original village has changed a lot and now the urban portion grows randomly on the reliefs and on the land without having the necessary facilities. The main part of the labor force is employed in Assiut. Only some industrial factories, agriculture activities and markets are located in Durunka.



THE VALLEY

The definition of what is rural and what is urban is always a question of degree and of level. In Egypt, especially, the definition of a rural settlement, a village, a hamlet or a city does not automatically follow quantitative facts and numbers, but rather tradition and administrative rules. This means that a village can have up to 30,000–50,000 inhabitants and still be considered a rural village. At the same time, a settlement with 2,000–5,000 inhabitants is still sometimes not considered a village. This leads to a large discrepancy between numbers describing the distribution of the population between urban and rural. It also raises the question of what is to be described as rural with respect to the urban. How does this fabric of settlements work, how are they connected, and do they not already shape a somewhat semi-urban situation? The organization and relationship between the villages and between the village and the closest city is still today heavily derived from traditional activities such as trade and farming, organizing the life in the villages. But the interaction between the villages, and especially between the village and the city, has significantly increased during the last decades. It has been enhanced by many different factors and changes in society at large, but most importantly the development of the infrastructure, the public transportation and the rise of work migration. The increased population has also led to a situation where many villagers no longer can provide for themselves but are dependent on cash-generating activities outside the village.

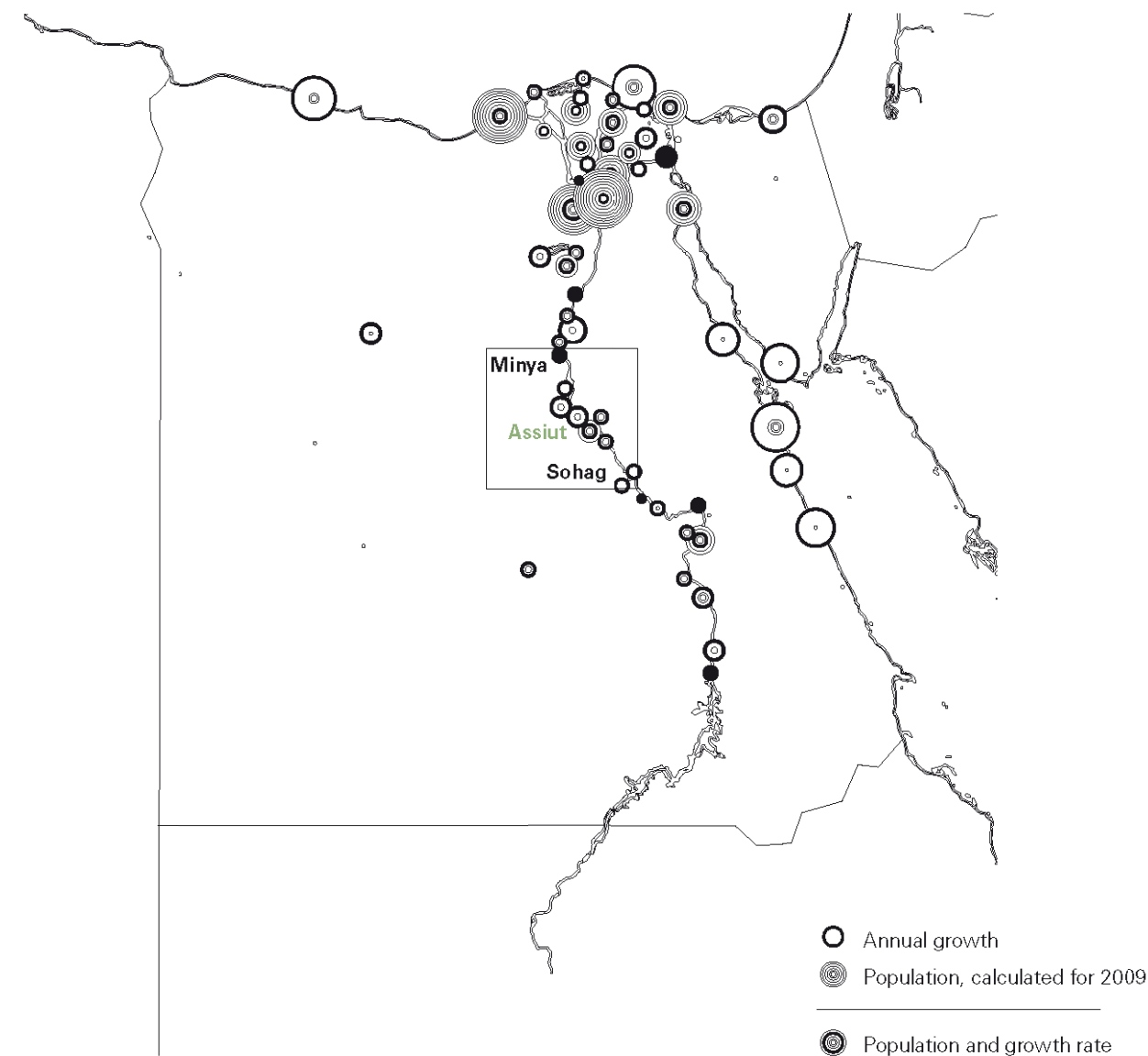


Bread Distribution

Bread is heavily subsidized by the government.

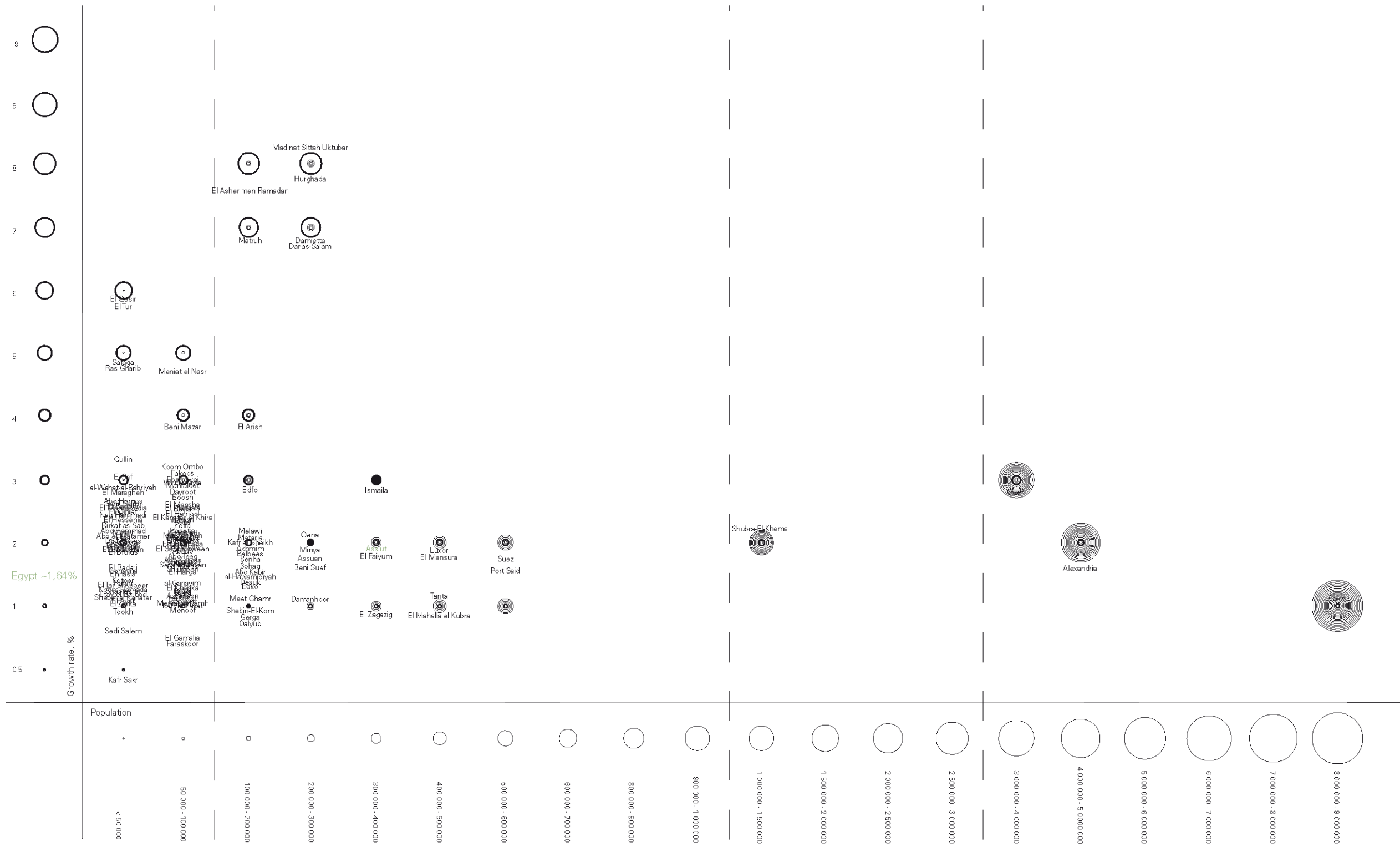
70 Million Along the Nile

The vast majority of Egypt's population lives in the Nile Valley or in the Nile Delta. This creates a dense layer of agglomerations, more or less evenly distributed across the whole valley and delta. The flux of people moving to the cities has been the most prominent factor of urbanization in Egypt up until recent decades. Cairo, for example, had immigration rates ranging from 2 to 2.8%. This type of internal migration has lost importance and the growth of the major cities has stabilized. The attractiveness of major cities has worn among the rural population mainly because of the many problems facing the newly arrived (insurmountable housing and transport problems) in the overpopulated cities and the fact that international migration offers a good alternative for rural families today. The most common occurrence of migration is time-limited and allows the families to stay in their villages, which contributes to the village's stable condition. Well-established migration channels leading directly from rural areas to foreign working sites have made migration to an Egyptian city obsolete. The cities that see the strongest growth today are driven by the growing tourist-related economy along the coasts.



Distribution of Cities in Egypt

Distribution of cities and their growth rates in Egypt.



A Dichotomy of Cities

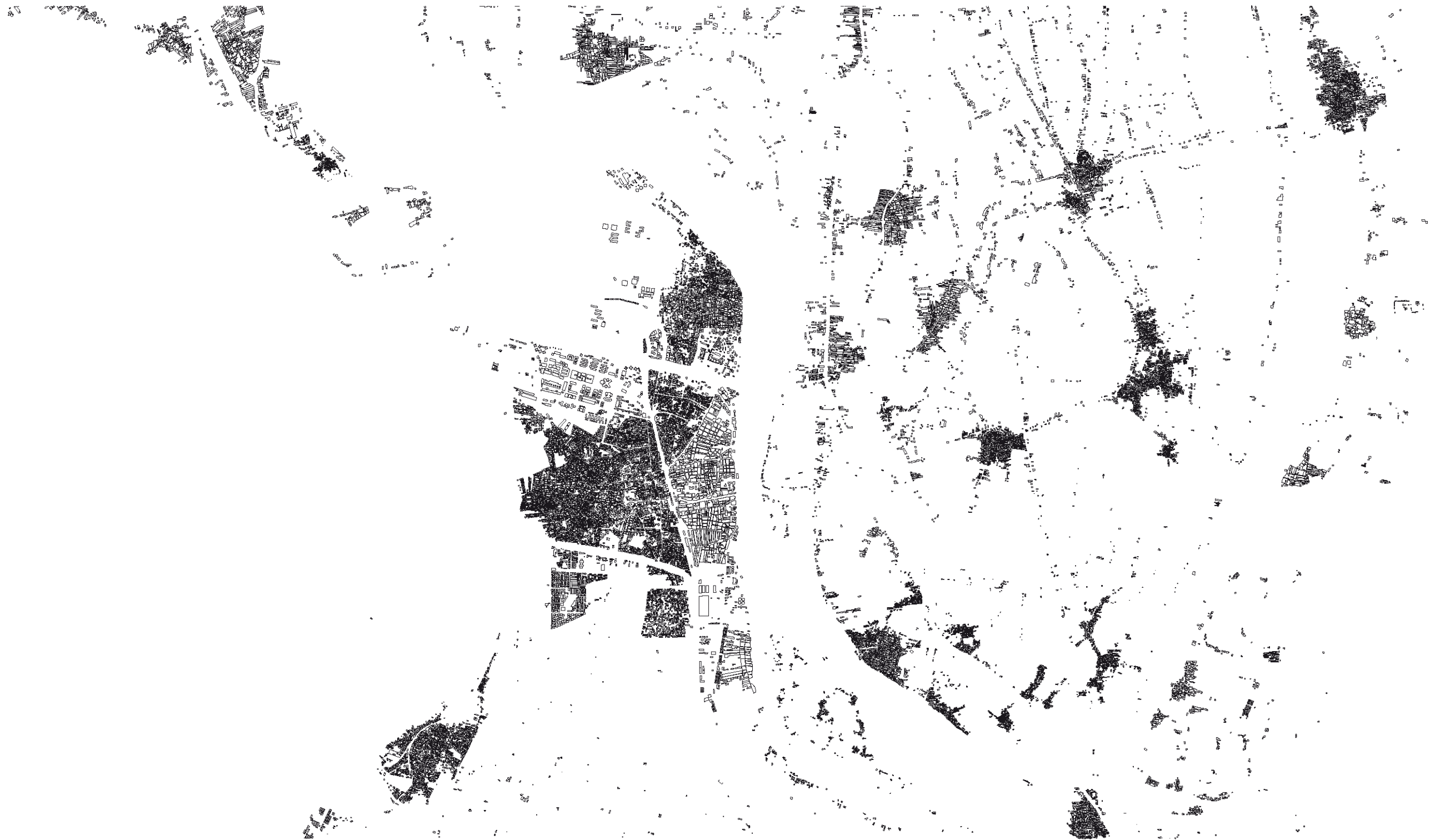


A Valley Mat

Approximately 58 percent of the Egyptian population lives in 5,630 villages and another thousand hamlets. These settlements are relatively evenly distributed through agricultural areas. As a result of the increasing population, the numbers of settlements as well as the area occupied by housing in general have increased. Topographical and natural conditions usually dictated that the villages were built on high land. After the Aswan Dam, new settlements were established along water channels and new national roads and railways. The most recent establishments are being built on the desert edge as a reaction to the strict agricultural land policy. The proximity to neighboring villages is, in most cases constant, and larger cities appear along the Nile in even intervals. There tends to be a slightly denser pattern around the cities, and one can observe channels and roads crossing through the landscape. Also the desert edges are slightly more legible through the higher concentration of settlements along them. A close look at the structure in the valley reveals a pattern of built connections. The settlements are no longer isolated islands in the landscape but a continuous mass of constructions.

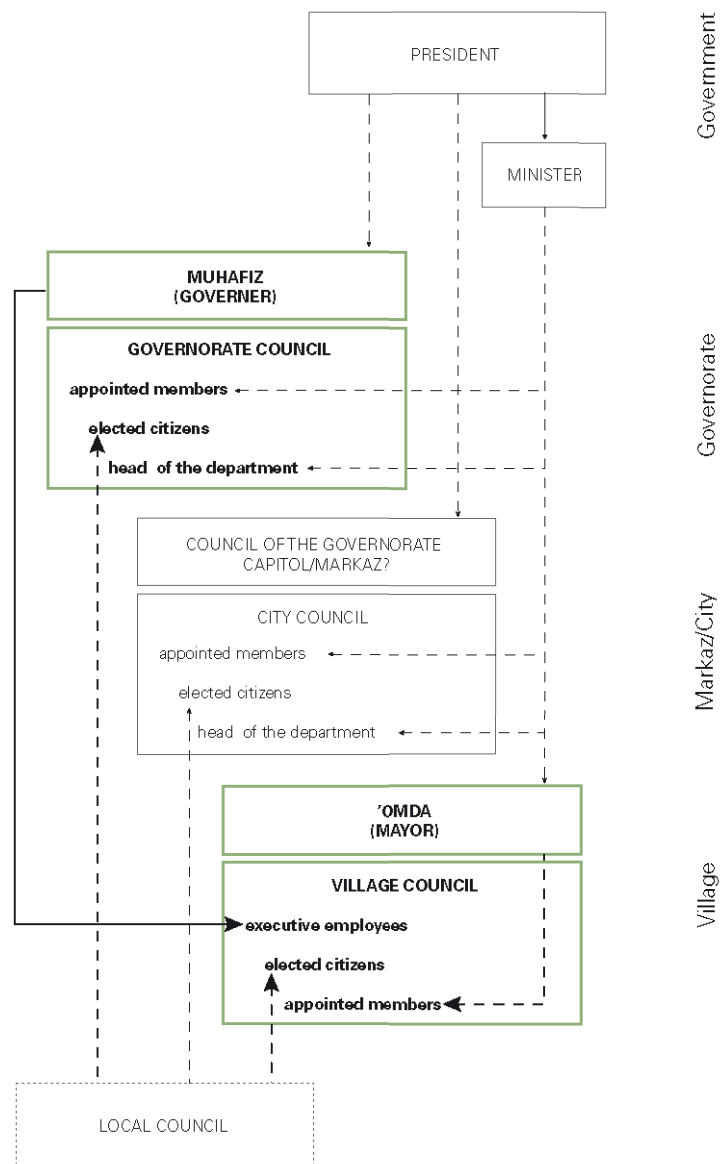
Agglomerations in the Valley

Settlements and cities from Minya to Sohag show even spread of villages. Illustration based on Google images.



Physical Relations

A pattern of built connections, the notion of a village border is overridden by the idea of a fabric or a mat.



Government

Governorate

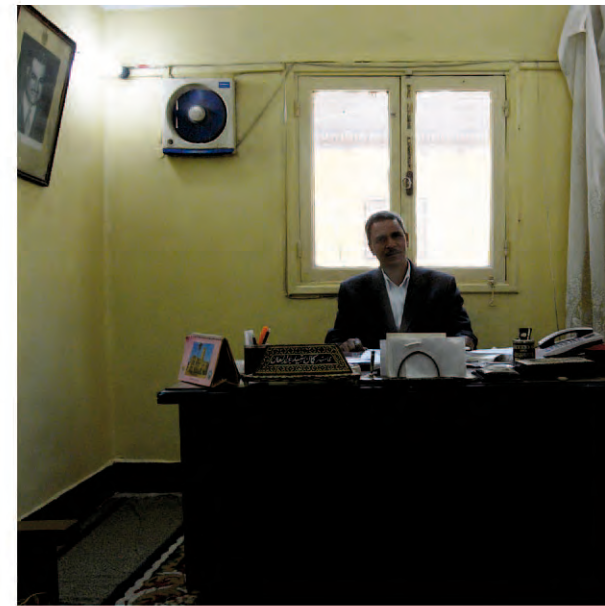
Markaz/City

Village

Governorate - Village Relations

Interconnections

Many interconnections in the valley create a mutual dependency between villages and the city, and the system of governance is assembled hierarchically. The executive board of the village is appointed by the governor and functions as an extended arm of the central power. The agricultural politics of the national administration in Cairo are administered via the governorate office. The village cooperatives operate on the most local level of governance, as a direct political interference in the life of the villages.



Head of the Administration

Kamal Sayed in ElWasta, appointed by the governor.



The Administration Building

One of few prominent buildings in El Fayma is the administration official building, built by the governorate.



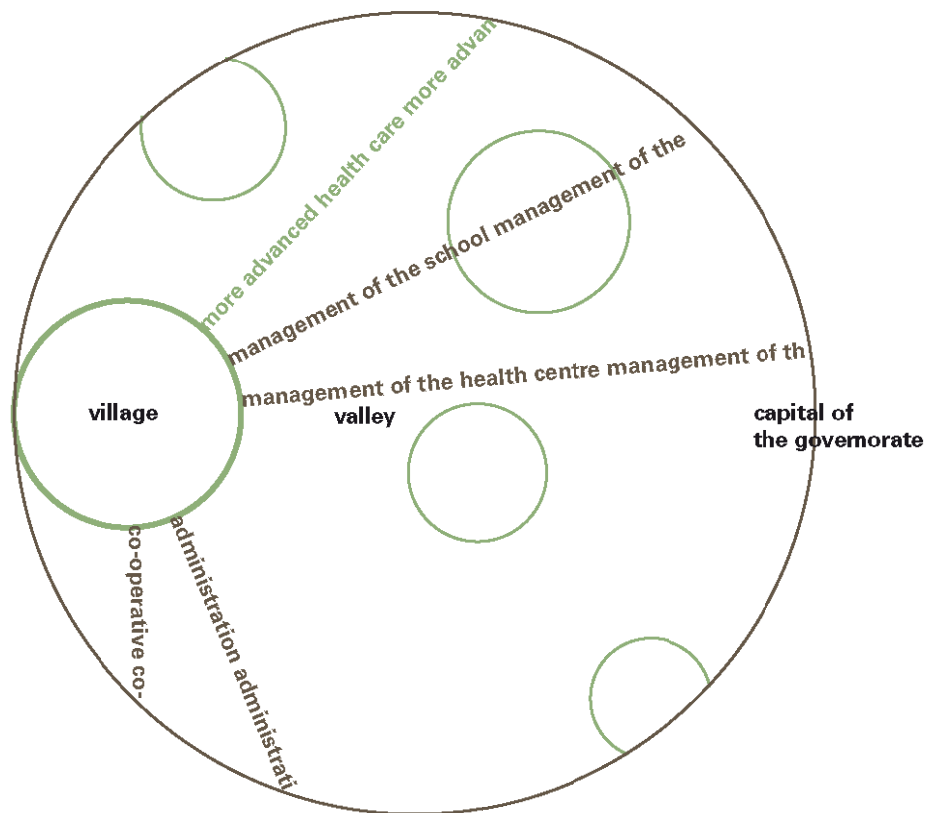
The Cooperative

Fertilizer used in the village is distributed and sold by the local cooperative, but only to the registered farmers.



Fertilizer from Alexandria

Farmers who want extra fertilizer or are not enrolled in a cooperative, are directed to traders like Skata Katefa Baket in El Fayma. He buys fertilizer from a wholesaler in Assiut.



Services

The governorate is obliged to provide education for all children. The school is often planned and built in a mother village but also serves a few villages in the area. Money and space allocated to the school is usually insufficient and leads to over-populated classes, as many as 60-70 pupils per class in elementary school. School management is run by the governorate with a local headmaster on site, and teacher wages are paid by the administration of education on the governorate level. The villages also provide health-care to a certain degree. Healthcare centers are run by a decree from the governorate and are state-funded. The healthcare is free but the medicine provided by the center costs about 1LE. The available medicine is not always satisfactory; sometimes, villagers must go to the city hospital to seek the medicine and care they need.



The School as Employer

Schools employ and engage many villagers. El Fayma holds two primary-, two middle-, and one secondary school, as well as an Islamic middle school for girls.



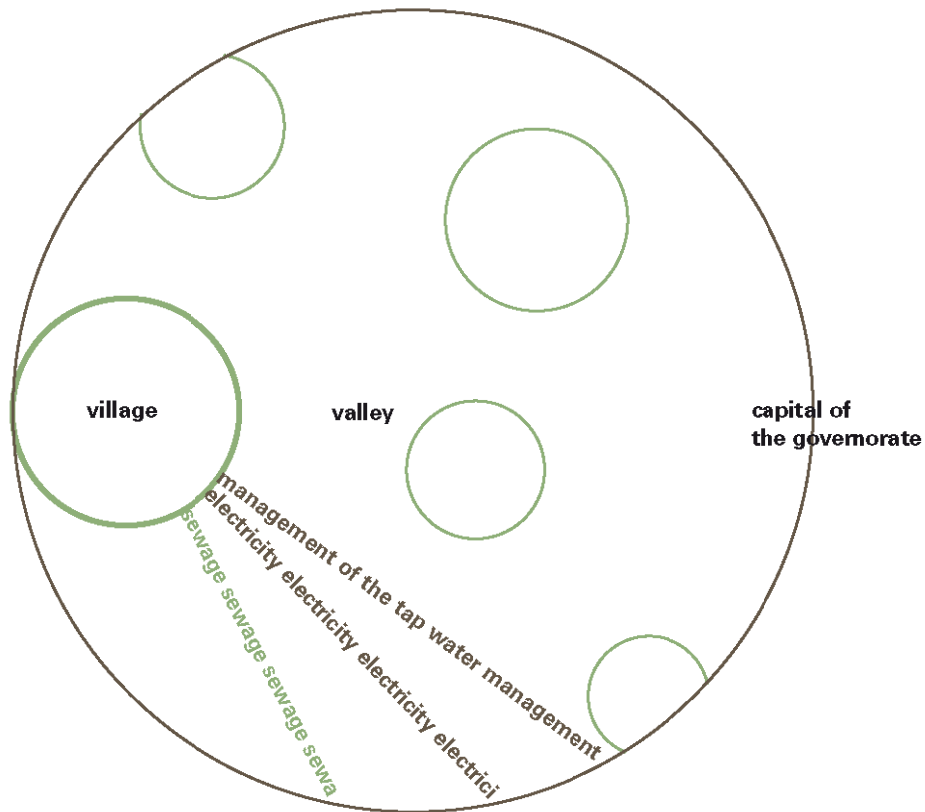
Over Populated Schools

Children from another four villages also attend the primary school in El Fayama, which has 2000 pupils. Primary and middle school, a total of six years, are mandatory. Because of the large classes, the level of education is lacking, leaving many children illiterate even after finishing school.



Healthcare Center

The healthcare center led by Dr. Fahd has 150 to 200 visits per day from 6 different villages. The center is always open and employs four doctors, eight nurses, and one dentist. Dr. Fadd moved to the village to work at the health center when it was built in 1970.



Infrastructure

Most villages have a centralized distribution of potable water via a network of pipes and a common water tower. Since water is directly taken from the ground and distributed without any purification, the water quality is often poor, depending on salination and ground pollution. All villages are connected to the national electricity network and all formal housing is supplied with electricity. A connection to the national telephone network is quite rare and only provided for the institutions or available for the very rich. Few households use a modern stove, and the gas used for it (and other equipment), is privately distributed, either by tradesmen or by the user.



Electricity for 50 LE per Month

Electricity is expensive for most villagers and constitutes a larger proportion of living expenses. Many wage workers, such as teachers, do not earn more than 460 LE per month.



Traditional Cooking

In addition to using the gas stove, this villager cooks in a traditional clay oven outside. Her husband buys bread in As-siut every day because there is not enough in Durunka.



Public Telephone

Very few households in the villages have their own telephone connection. The number is also not likely to rise considerably due to new alternative techniques.



Water Tower in El Fayma

The central water distribution system was built in 1949. The management of water distribution is run by a central governorate administration.

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Flow of People

The interconnections between the villages, and especially between the village and the city, have increased much since the first private taxis appeared in the 1970s. Today villages heavily rely on the network of buses and taxis serving the countryside. The economy and lifestyle of the villages is dependent on these connections.



"I can get almost everything..."

I need here in the village but I go to Assiut with the mini bus almost once a week. There I can get some special food and clothes for me and my family," says Tawfek Shahata Nassar, teacher at the primary school in El Fayma.



"I visit my sister now and then..."

She lives in Assiut, and I go there for fun sometimes during the holidays. The markets and the shops in the city have more to offer. Otherwise I can get everything I need here in El Fayma," says Asmah, Ahmed's mother.



"I work in a hotel in Assiut..."

so I go there every day. Also my brothers work in Assiut, one as a police officer and one in a factory "says Ahmed Mursi who lives with his parents and brothers in El Fayma. The family has no farming land and all the sons support the family through wage labor outside the village.



300 Buses a Day

The main road passing through El Fayma is well used. Many buses go to Assiut and El Fath every day. Workers, university students, tradesmen, market visitors all use the mini buses. Special school buses are also arranged to transport girls from the Islamic school.

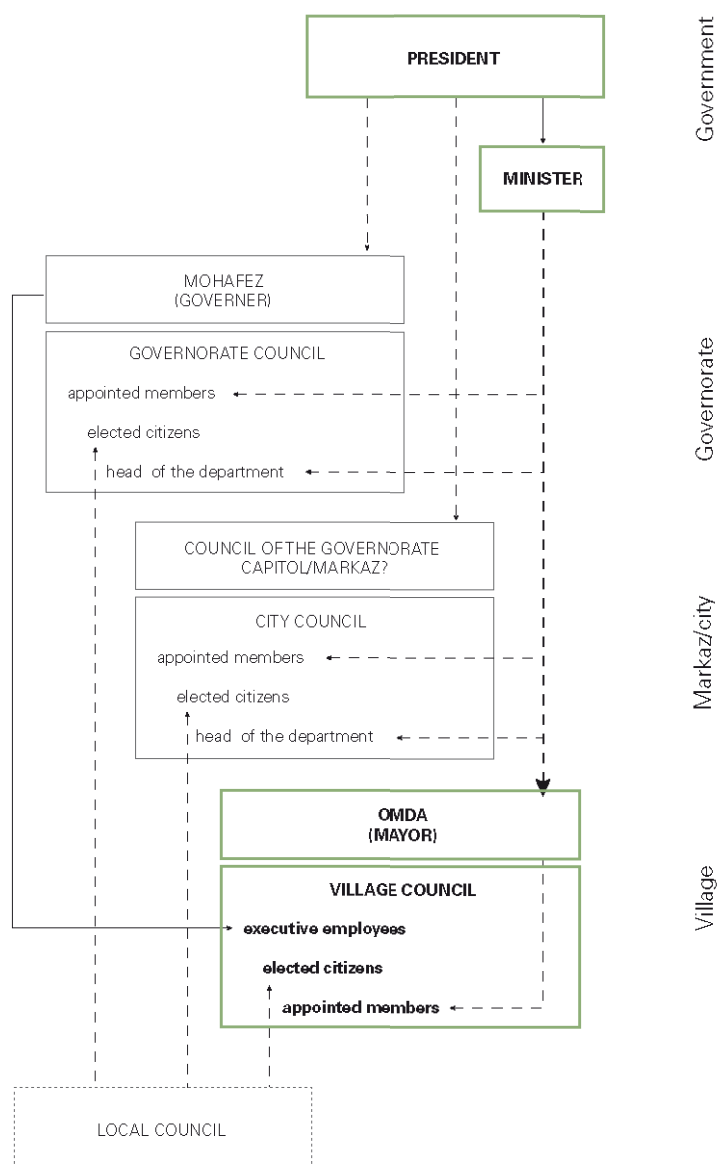
BEYOND THE VILLAGE

If this network, mass, or mat of rural settlements is the body of Egypt's urban fabric, what is its relation to the world outside the valley? What factors and interactions affect and impose a noticeable impact on this stable urban structure? There are both formal and informal, direct and indirect cultural, economical, and political connections to the surrounding world affecting village life.



A Cairo Dream

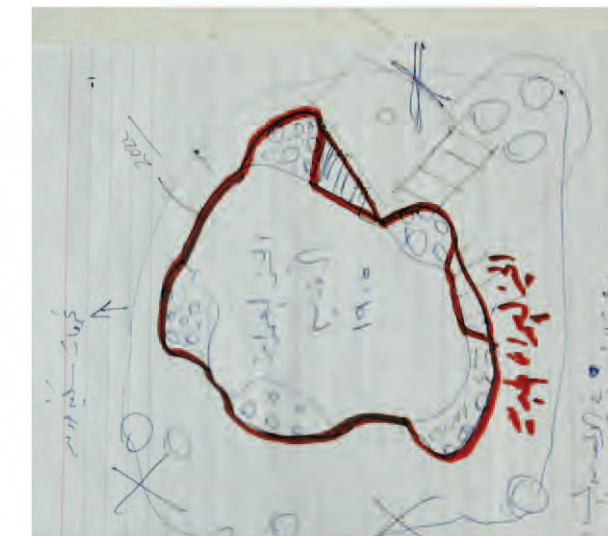
Hasanen dreams of moving to Cairo, so his sons will have the chance to develop a better future in the city.



Egypt - Village Relations

Connections

The 'Omda's position in the village is sanctioned by the Minister of Interior Affairs, but is officially elected by the villagers. In reality, he is still appointed or elected according to the traditional structure of the village. Many political decisions taken by the government in Cairo concern the villages and directly impact village life. In many cases, it has shown to be difficult to implement new decrees or laws; the religion and traditions of the village sometimes create strong opposition, like the case of Nasser's birth control program in the 1960s. Many propositions passed in Cairo are executed by the local governorate administration, which work more or less as an extended arm of the government.



Future Development Plans

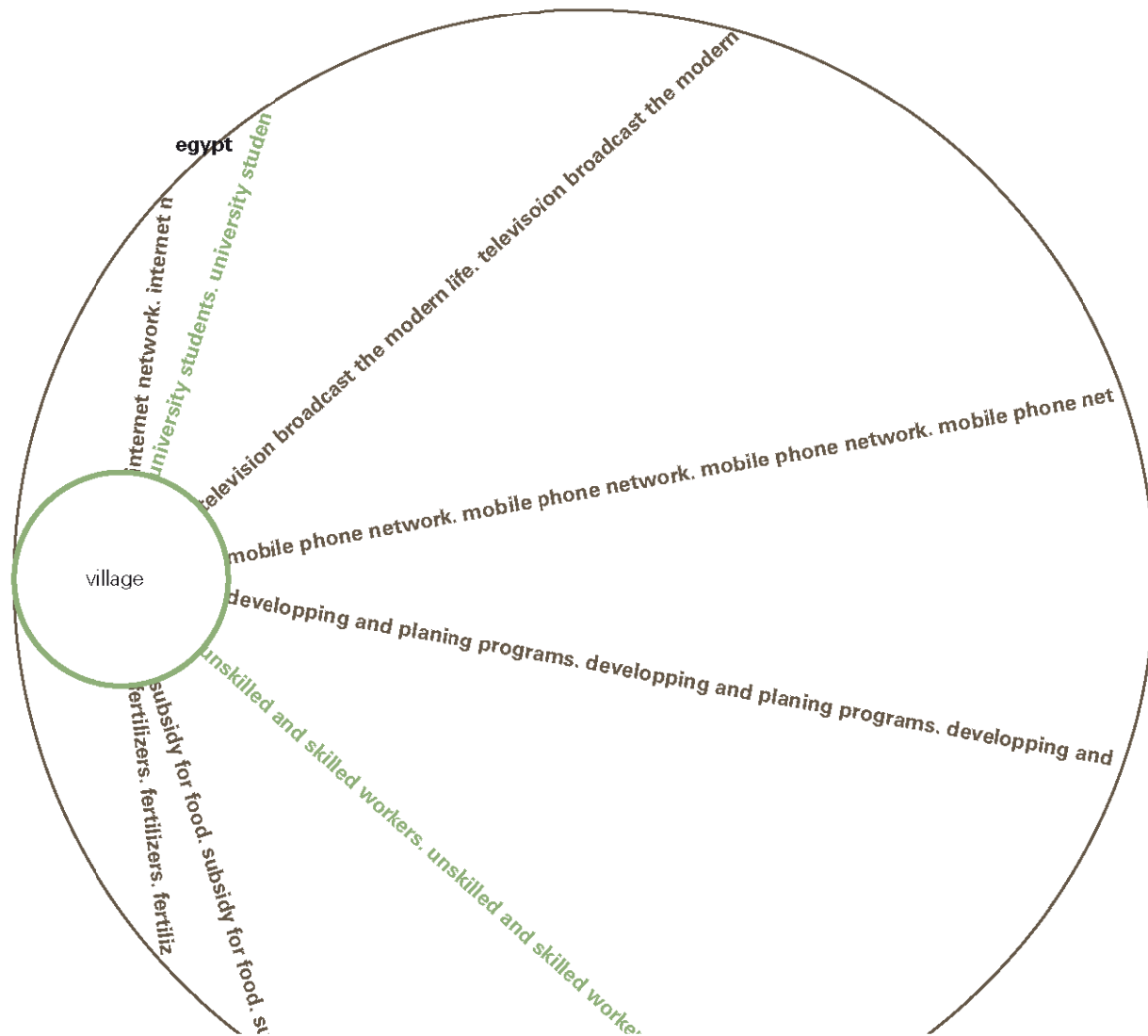
A decree taken by the government, or the Minister of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities, states that all villages and rural settlements shall have a "Strategic Plan" for their future development, directing all aspects from social, environmental and economical development as well as handling their future growth. The Strategic Plan's main object is to state a new fixed border for the village, a defined legal border for future growth disabling future growth on valuable agricultural land. This has been done before (via Hayez, a previously determined territorial line), but the then-defined border has not always been recognized as a legal factor of importance and has been ignored, allowing villages to rapidly expand. Writing Strategic Plans and mapping all agglomerations in Egypt has not been done consistently before, and having all these comprehensible and comparable plans might help strengthen the notion of a juridical border. The Strategic Plans are being written by the GOPP (General Organization of Physical Planning), who delegate the task to persons tied to the planning administration and/or architectural- and planning departments of the universities of Egypt. The process of developing these plans must follow a Participational Planning Strategy and involve people from the village.

This Strategic Plan is an example of how villages and hamlets are governed or controlled on a state level, as is the The National Project for Developing Villages Surrounded by Desert and the project of creating "sister-villages"



Bread for the People

An important government-implemented reform is subsidized food for the poor, especially the bread program. The state meets 96 percent of the cost. This has directly impacted village life where many people depend on subsidized food. About 55 million or two-thirds of the population is entitled to subsidized rations of food according to the Guardian. Local village bakeries have been established; their economy and daily schedule are organized around the bread pick-up event.



Infrastructure and Connections

Almost all families have a television even though not every one has a receiver. The presence of this one-way, Cairo - peasant communication shapes the villager's view of the surrounding world and their impression of the easy, modern life of the middle class in Cairo. Mobile phones are another prominent source of communication in the villages. In contrast to the low number of household with a landline, almost all households seem to have at least one mobile phone, allowing a direct mode of communication over long distances. Few computers exist, mainly at the Office of Administration and at the schools, with the exception of one village that had an internet café. Few families own a computer, much less an internet connection.



Mobile Phones

A mobile phone with camera function, pictures of the girlfriend, and numbers to a bunch of friends in Assiut—the villagers are well-connected. The number of mobile subscribers has, on a national scale, increased from 2.1% to 30.9% from 1999 to 2006.



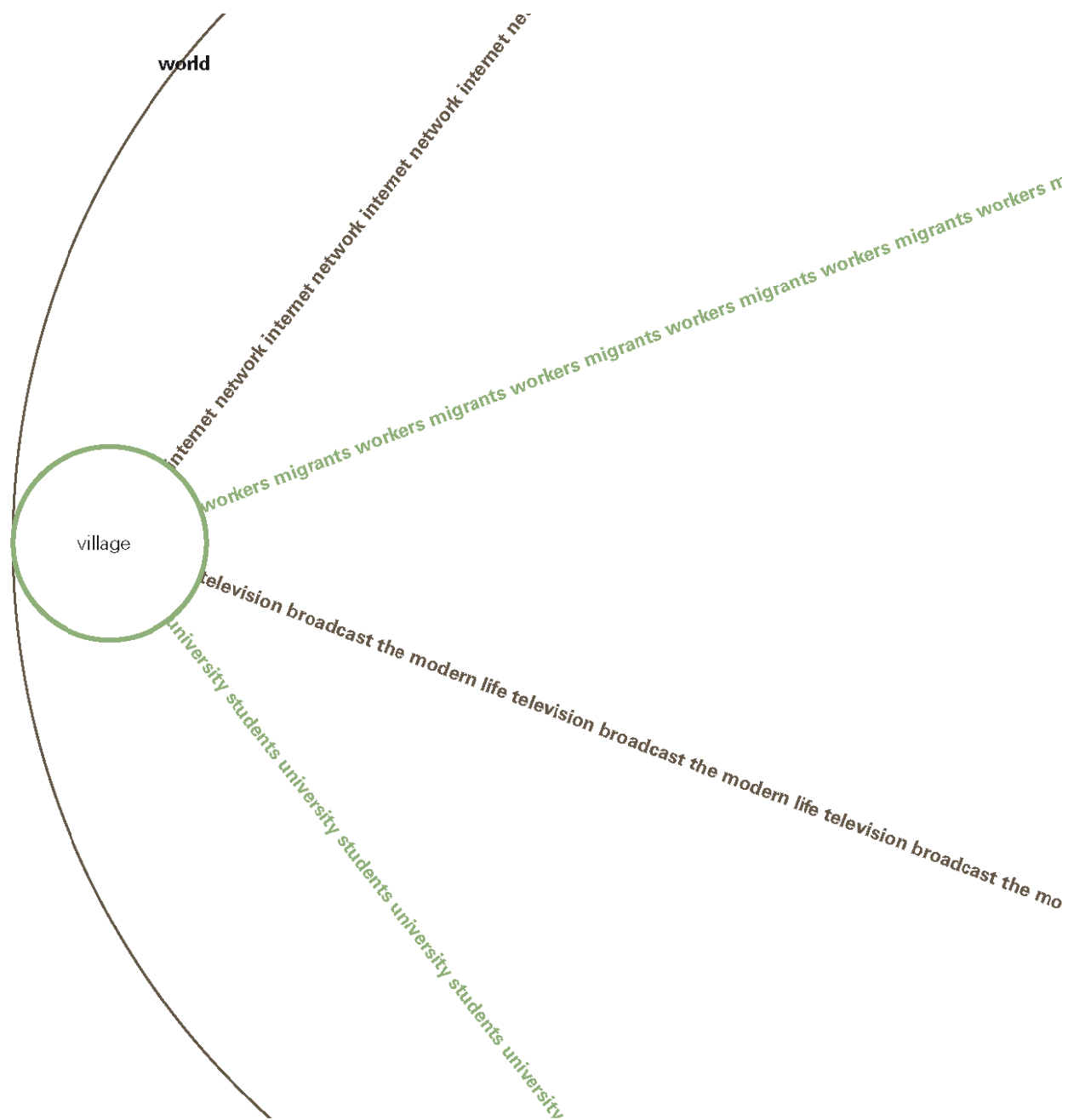
Internet and Computer Games

Durunka holds at least one computer shop and internet café, mostly used by young boys. Internet users in Egypt rose from 0.3% to 9.5% between 1999 and 2006. This phenomenon is muted in the case of the villages.



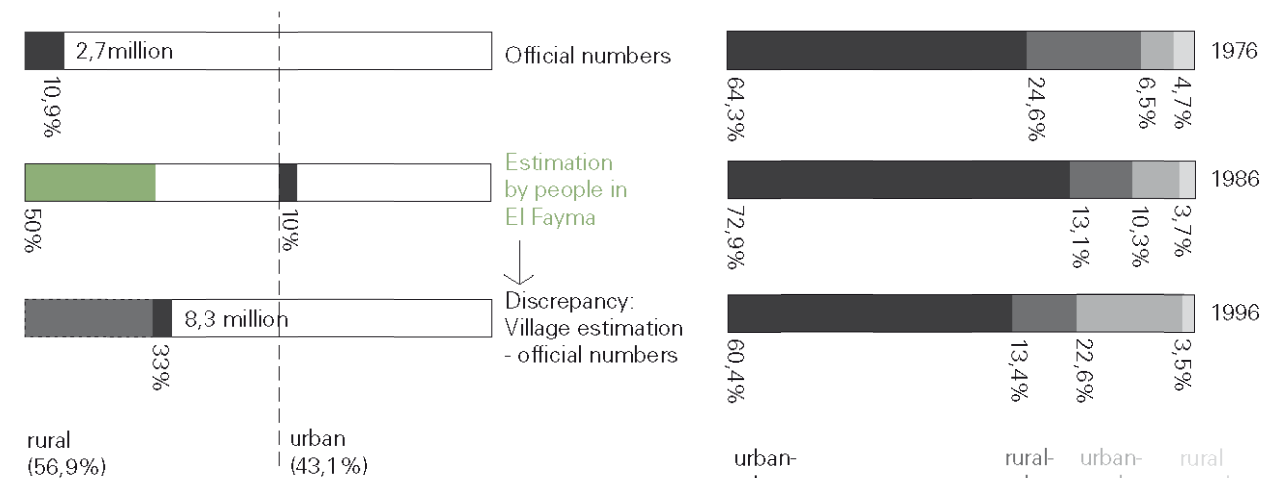
TV

The TV is prominently placed in the reception room.



Migration

Working migration is not a new phenomenon but it has increased in numbers and importance for Egypt and particularly for the rural population. Both permanent and temporary internal migration to the bigger cities occur and temporary migration abroad to MENA countries also is fairly common. The internal migration also goes in the other direction, from urban to rural areas. International migration has shifted from a mostly urban, educated labour force to a majority of rural, uneducated workers. Rural families have a direct connection with the world, and migration is highly important to rural settlements. Outside employment and remittances enable the family to stay in the village.



Per cent International Migrants of Labour Force, Egypt 2007

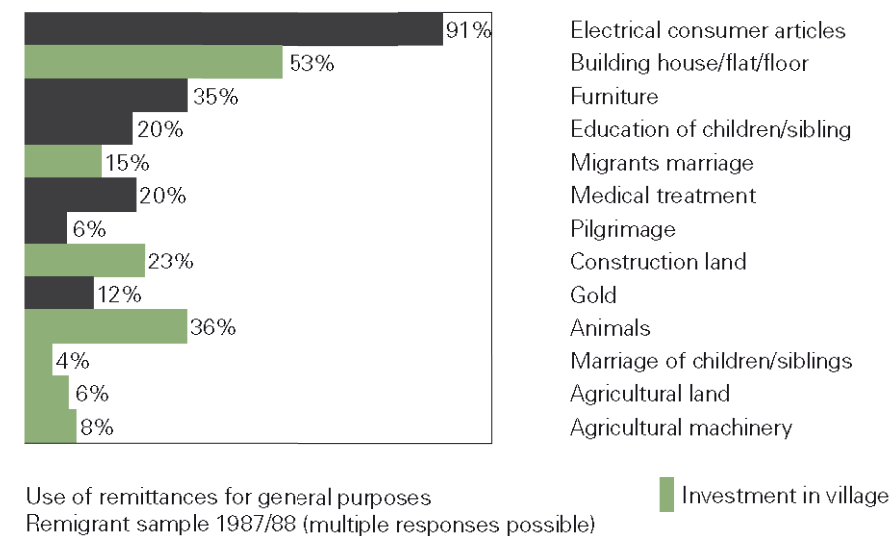
Migration by Type of Movement, Egypt 1976-1996

International Migration

Official numbers vary, and are contradictory to estimations done by people in the villages with whom we have spoken. Calculations based on: "CAPMAS The Statistical Year Book 2007" and "Interrelationships between Internal and International Migration in Egypt: A Pilot Study", Ayman Zohry.

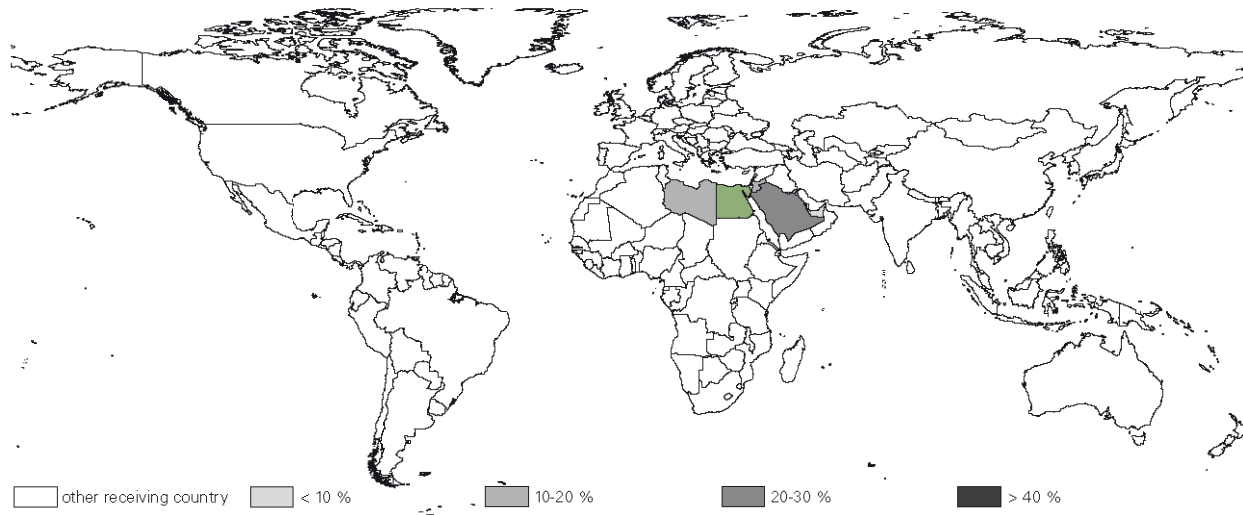
Changes in Internal Migration

The statistics do not tell if migration is temporary or permanent. Source: "Interrelationships between Internal and International Migration in Egypt: A Pilot Study", Ayman Zohry



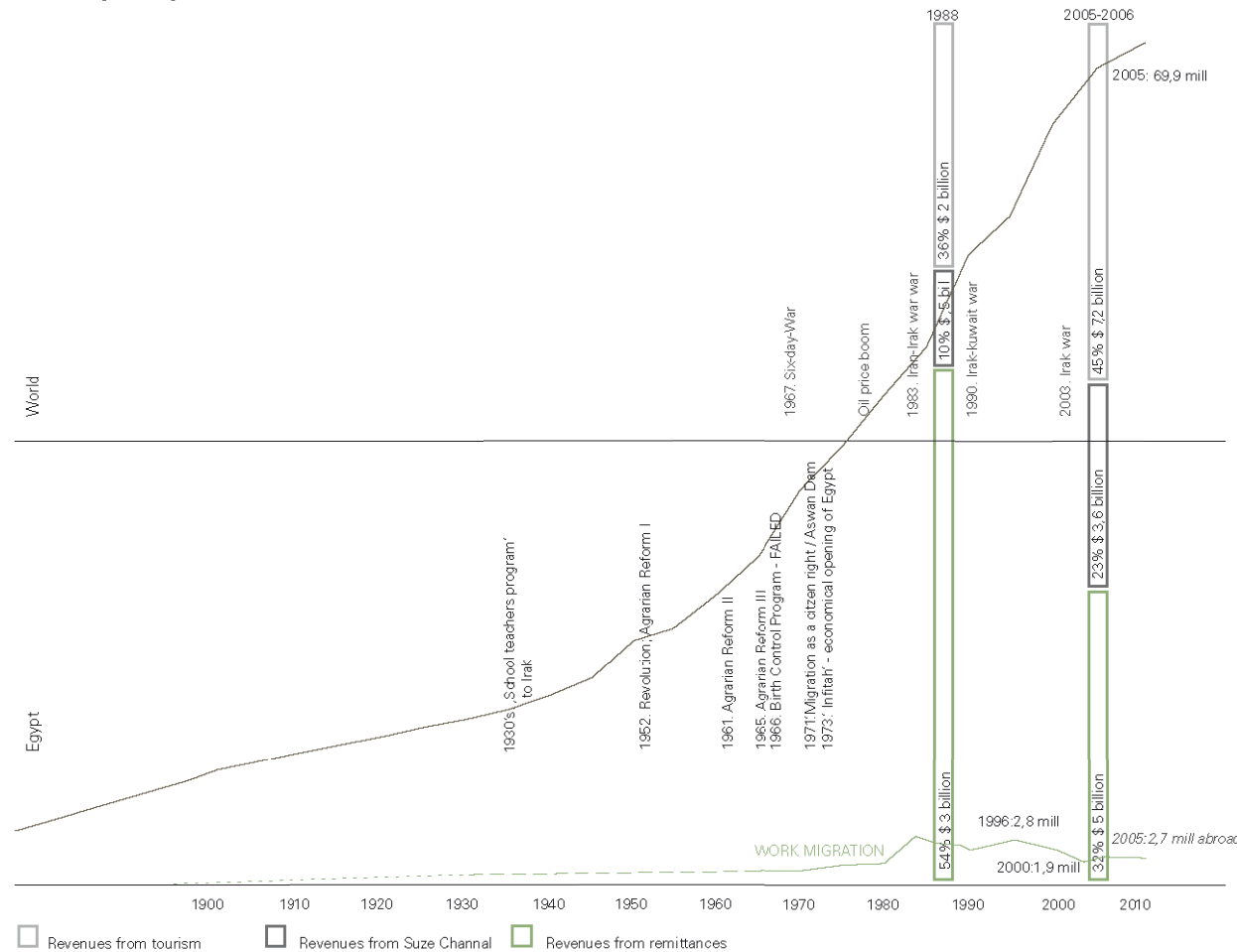
Remittances

Much of the remittances generated by migrants are invested in the village—a source for the village's economy. Source: "Inside the Third World Village," Petra Weyland.



International Migration

Most migrants go to other MENA countries.



Migration Timeline



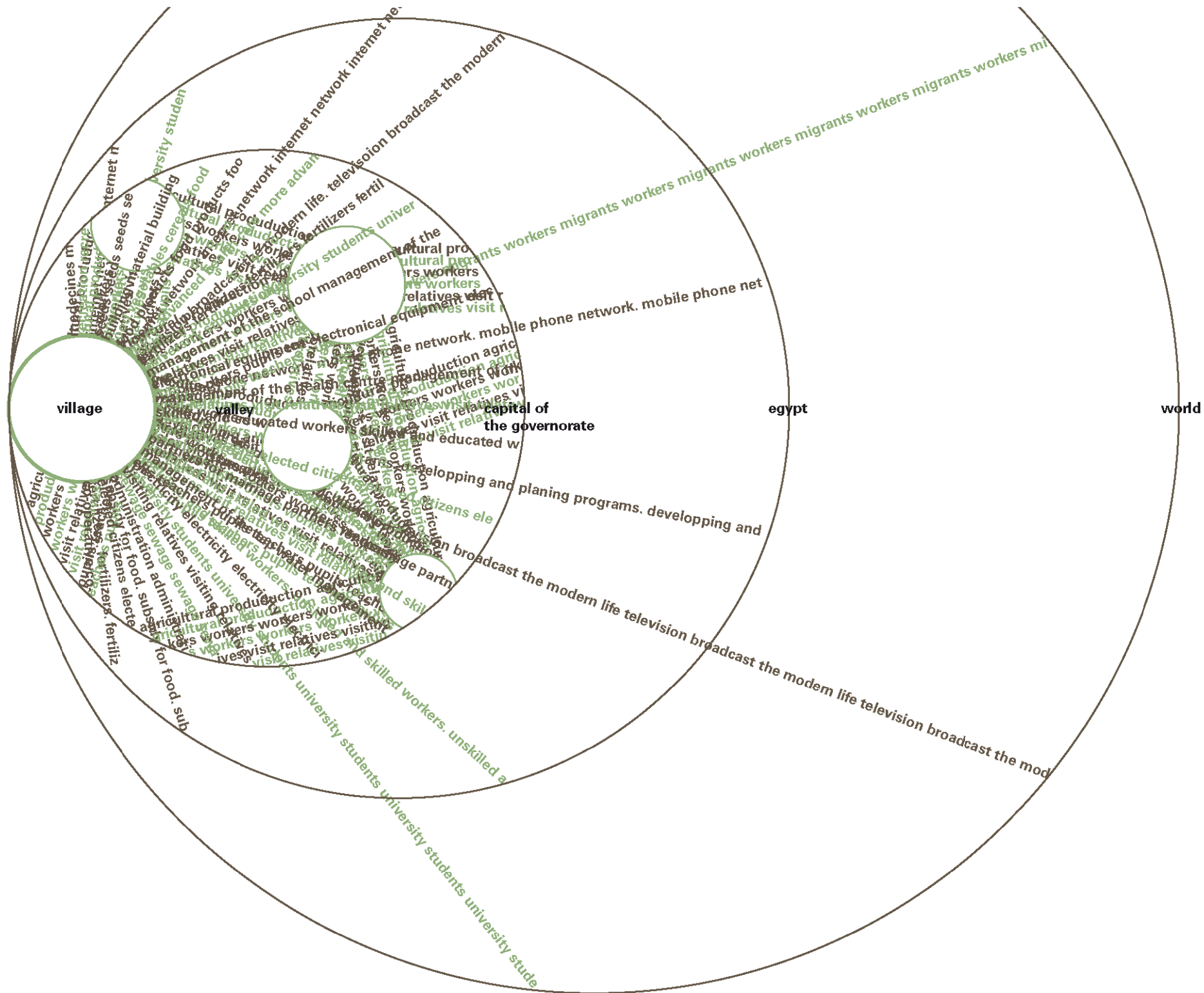
Ahmed Sayed, salesman

“I worked in Kuwait for one and a half years. I worked with computers, mostly writing or typing. That is where I learned English! When my dad called and said he found this job for me at Telecom Egypt, I came home. Now I am building my own family house here in the village. My father helped me find the land and I am building the house with the money I earned in Kuwait. I also own a house with apartments in Assiut, where I live during the week, but only until the house is finished. Then I will marry and move back. I want to live close to my family, my parents and my brothers. Life is easier here, and cheaper!” March 24th 2009, El Fayma



My Husband is in Cairo

“My husband and one of my sons are working in Cairo, and my other son is working in Libya. They come back every two to three months and stay at home for about 20 days before they leave again.” Reda el Hakayma, mother and grandmother. “I live here in this house with my daughter, my two daughters in law and my grandchildren. There are 15 of us altogether.” March 26th 2009, El Fayma



The Village, the Valley, and Beyond



Stability

The village built up by its stable family units constitutes the smallest part in the network of settlements covering the Nile Valley—a networked community where flows of goods, people, and money constantly increases, resulting in mutual dependence between the village and its network. These flows are temporary but recurrent, and reciprocal. Goods are moved, transformed, and consumed, but people tend to move on a temporary basis, for work or studies. Establishing this static pattern of living is the flagrant family-tradition inside the village. In this unit, dependency and collaboration is strong, and direct both the social and economical aspects of the individual's life. The necessity of the “way of life” in the community and its slow and stable metabolism orchestrate the community and network mood. Proximity to cities affects the degree of urbanization and dependency between the village and the city. Greater proximity can lead to shrinking agricultural land and a higher connectivity and resulting flow of people, turning close villages into suburbs. The Egyptian village is strongly integrated into its surroundings; its quality of life establishes it as a sustainable and stable organism.

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IMAGE CREDITS

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