Architecture, Change, and Conceptions of Modernity in Balat, Dakhla Oases

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, and Egyptology

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

In Sociology - Anthropology

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Under the supervision of Dr. Joseph Hill

March 2011

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Dedication

To my father, who has always encouraged me to seek knowledge: No words of gratitude will ever be up to your love and generosity.

To 25 January revolution companions and martyrs all over Egypt.
Acknowledgments

Firstly, I'm grateful to God, for guiding my way through life and my study years and for granting me the strength to continue my graduate study.

I would like to express my gratitude to the members of my thesis committee, my adviser, Dr. Joseph Hill, and the two readers, Dr. Nazek Nosseir and Dr. Kamal Fahmi. I'm grateful to Dr. Hill for the effort he made to guide me in writing. Without his guidance and support, this thesis would not have arrived at its current form. His detailed and insightful comments helped me to refine my argument. I thank Dr. Hill for the sessions we had to discuss my work. In these sessions, which were no less than three hours each, he shared his deep knowledge of social theory with me. Moreover, the references he recommended helped me deepen my theoretical outlook. I also appreciate Dr. Hill's efforts in correcting my grammatical mistakes and editing my thesis.

I would like to thank Dr. Nosseir for her constructive comments which helped me improve my thesis. I was fortunate to participate in her "Survey Research" class in spring 2005, from which I learned a great deal about research methods. I thank her for sharing her profound knowledge with us and for her competent simplification of difficult concepts. My thanks also go to Dr. Fahmi for his comments, which added to my work and improved the organization of my thesis. I thank him very much for allowing me to audit his "Advanced Research Design and Proposal Writing" class in fall 2008, which helped me greatly in developing my proposal and designing my research.

I'm grateful to Dr. Hanan Sabea, my former adviser, for many things. I thank her for her insightful comments to my comprehensive exam in the fall of 2006, which encouraged me to build on my previous research in Balat for this thesis. Dr. Sabea guided me through the process of writing my thesis proposal, designing my research, and conducting fieldwork. She advised me to read important references, which added a lot to my research, and gave me constructive comments for thesis chapter one. Furthermore, she accepted me as an auditor in her "Contemporary Social Thought" class in spring 2010, from which I learned a great deal about social theory. I owe special thanks to Dr. Sabea for supporting my applications for the university fellowship and the graduate students' research grant, which I received in fall 2009.

I would like to thank all the professors who supported my application for the graduate students' research grant, which enabled me to conduct the ethnographic fieldwork for my thesis: Dr. Nazek Nosseir, Head of the Sociology Unit, Dr. Mona Abaza, former Chair of the SAPE department, Dr. Ann Lesch, former Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Dr. Ali Hadi, Vice Provost and Director of Graduate Studies and Research. My thanks go also to staff members of the Office of the Vice Provost, Ms. Nancy Daoud, and Ms. Basma el Maabady for their administrative efforts concerning the grant.

I would like to thank Dr. Helen Rizzo, Chair of the SAPE department, Dr. Hanan Sabea, former Head of the Anthropology Unit, and Dr. Ali Hadi for supporting my application for a supplement to the graduate students' research grant when my
research period had to be extended in Balat due to the wide scope of research and difficulties in the field. I appreciate Dr. Rizzo's support when she was graduate adviser for granting me permission to use the library for my research when I was on leave of absence.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Kevin Dwyer for many things. I was fortunate to take his two courses "Contemporary Anthropological Theory", in the spring of 2003, and "Ethnographic fieldwork", in the spring of 2004, which were instrumental in introducing me to and grounding me in the fields of anthropology and ethnography. Attending these classes was a great learning experience as well as a source of enjoyment. Dr. Dwyer assigned useful readings, explained difficult theories very clearly, had a unique sense of humor, and always allocated time after class to answer my questions and explain what I found difficult in the assigned readings. I'm thankful to him for always appreciating my research work. I'm grateful to Dr. Dwyer for allowing me to sit in on two other interesting classes in the fall 2004 semester: "Anthropology and Film" and "Sociology of Knowledge". I owe Dr. Dwyer a great deal for his letter of recommendation for the university fellowship, which I received in fall 2009.

My thanks go to Dr. Abdallah Cole, whose "Economic Anthropology" course I attended in spring 2003, and from which I learned so much about how economic and political structures influence social life. I thank him for his mentoring, his constructive comments on my assignments, and for his kindness.

I'm also grateful to Dr. Chad Haines, whose course "Globalization, Consumption, and Desire" I attended in spring 2006. I not only learned so much from this course, but I really enjoyed it. I thank Dr. Haines for the time he took to explain difficult theoretical concepts to me in ways both simple and deep. I thank him for appreciating the effort I put into my assignments. I will always be grateful to Dr. Haines for recommending me for the university fellowship of fall 2009.

I wish to thank Dr. Maha Abdel Rahman, my adviser for the comprehensive exam that I took in fall 2006, for her insightful comments, which helped me elaborate my argument. I thank her particularly for her class "Structure and Process in Egyptian Society", which I attended in fall 2004. I learned invaluable lessons about Egypt's political economy from this class.

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Reem Saad. I sent her an e-mail asking if she could send me her research paper "What's Urban about Rural Egypt?". Not only did she immediately e-mail this paper, but also sent another one, "Mud Brick or No Mud Brick: Architectural Preference in Two Upper Egyptian Communities", also relating to the topic of my thesis. These two papers from Dr. Saad, who is known for her research experience on rural Egypt, have been invaluable in guiding me in designing my research, conducting fieldwork, and writing my thesis.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Ahmad Abou Zeid, professor of anthropology and founder of the Anthropology Department in Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University, and Dr. Zeinab el Deeb, renowned visual anthropologist. I thank them for encouraging me to study anthropology and for directing my attention to the importance of taking courses on modernity. I'm fortunate that I had the
opportunity to meet with and learn from professors of the caliber and stature of Dr. Abou Zeid, and Dr. el Deeb.

I remain indebted to three distinguished professors in the Arab and Islamic Civilizations Department, for allowing me to audit their classes, from which I gained invaluable knowledge. I thank Dr. Huda Lutfi for allowing me to sit in on her two classes: "Introduction to Sufism" in spring 2004, and "Muslim Political Thought" in fall 2007. I learned a lot from Dr. Lutfi's insightful comments and critical engagement with the issues addressed in the two classes. I also thank Dr. Samia Mehrez for permitting me to attend her class, "Arabic Literature and Film" in spring 2008. This course introduced me to new insights and analyses that added to my knowledge of Egypt and life in general. It was one of the most interesting and enjoyable courses that I took at AUC. My thanks also go to Dr. Joseph Lumbard for allowing me to audit his two classes: "Introduction to Islam", in spring 2004 and "Islamic Philosophy in fall 2004. Giving his very well prepared and unique lectures, Dr. Lumbard introduced us to the world of Islamic philosophy and Sufi studies. I'm so grateful to him, as attending these two classes has been an invaluable experience of learning.

I remain exceedingly indebted to Dr. Maryam Sharief for being very generous in sharing her deep knowledge of Islamic philosophy and Sufism with me, for spending many hours answering my questions and helping me resolve my confusions, and for sharing her valuable references with me. No amount of gratitude can ever be sufficient to repay her.

I'm deeply grateful to Dr. Hind Abdelal, specialist in Chinese Traditional Medicine, for volunteering to translate my main reference on Balat, Hivernel's book "Balat, Etude Ethnologique d'une Communaute Rurale", from French to English. I am also indebted to her for the moral support she gave me during the difficult times I went through during my study years. Without her support, this thesis and my academic achievements in the years 2005, 2006 would not have been possible.

I would like to thank Ms. Elisabeth Yoder, the distinguished mentor from the English Language Institute, with whom I took my first two courses at the graduate program: "Academic Writing", in fall 2001, and "Library Research and Skills" in spring 2002. The two courses have been influential in introducing me to and grounding me in academic writing and library research.

I would like to thank Ms. Dalia Adel our Graduate Program Officer, at the SAPE Department for her support throughout my study years in the Sociology-Anthropology Program. Being a knowledgeable and efficient officer, she professionally and friendly guided me in handling administrative issues. I would like also to thank Ms. Aida Selim, former Assistant to Chair of the SAPE department and the other members of the department, Ms. Safaa Sedqi, Ms. Lilian Boutros, Ms. Reem Rafique Mershak, former Administrative Assistant, as well as Ms. Odette Onsi, Administrative Assistant at the Dean's office, for their assistance and friendliness.

My special thanks go to Ms. Nawal Aboul Ela Ahmed, Associate Director for Financial Aid, and Ms. Abla Osman, Associate Registrar for Academic Affairs and Student Records, not only for their efficiency and professionalism, but for being the
friendliest administrators at AUC, who always welcomed my visits to their offices and answered my questions about various administrative issues. I remain grateful to them for their support throughout my study years. I would like also to thank Ms. Sawsan Mardini, Director of Graduate Students Services, for her efforts in supporting graduate students.

My profound thanks go to all members of the AUC Libraries’ team headed by Dean Shahira el Sawy, for the great efforts they make to facilitate our research. Much as I would like to, I cannot thank everyone concerned, so I will name those members of staff, to whom I resorted for help on several occasions: Mr. Mamdouh Phillip, Ms. Lesley Tweedle, Ms. Rose Johnston, Ms. Jayme Spencer, Mr. Casey Grimmer, Ms. Nermine Rifaat, and Ms. Nevine Harraz.

I wish to express my thanks to the technical support specialists who assisted me in processing my research photographs by using Photoshop and who helped me prepare the photographs for printing: Ms. Iman Abdallah from the HUSS, Mr. Mohammad Abdel Azim, Mr. Khaled el Feqi, Mr. Khaled Mohammad, and Mr. Ahmad Mera from the BEC. I would also like to thank the AUC cleaners for the huge efforts they make to keep our campuses beautiful, and I hope they achieve their full rights.

My profound thanks go to all my informants in Balat, since without their cooperation this thesis would not have existed. I thank them for sharing their time, thoughts, and experiences with me. As it is difficult to mention everyone, I will confine myself to naming the key informants. I'm especially thankful to: Dr. Abdel Monem Hanafi, Mr. Fathi Ibrahim Abdel Mukhtar, Mr. Abdel Wahab Abdel Salam Zakhira, Mr. Saber Ahmad Mohammad Saqr, Mr. Farouq el Prince, Mr. Safey el Din Hamouda Mebarez, Mr Abul Hasan Sayyed Sanusi Hamad, Ms. Fatma Mansour Sanusi, Mr. Hashim Sid Ruhu Mansur Sanusi, Ms. Ibtisam Mansur Sanusi, Mr. Abul Hasan Sayyed Saqr, Mr. Mansur Seif el Din Mansur, Mr. Bayyoumi Mohammad Sanusi, Ms. Samiha Abou Zeid, Engineer Sayyed Daen, Engineer Mustafa Daen, Engineer Mervat Habib, Dr. Talat Bashandi, Mr. Kamel Abdallah, Ms. Aesha Metaweaa Abdelal, Ms. Samia Khalifa Mohammad, Ms. Fatma Khalifa Bakr, Ms. Nagat Ibrahim Abou Elioun, Mr. Abu Seif Saad, Ms. Azeza Mohammad Abdallah, Mr. Mansour Kamel Qawashti, Mr. Mustafa Kamel Qawashti, Ms. Sadeya widow of Mr. Kamel Qawashti, Ms. Sayyeda Abbas, Ms. Fawzeyya, Mr. Sayyed Abdel Dayem, Mr. Hammouda Metwalli Azzouz, Ms. Hekmat, Mr. Ahmad Qenawi, Ms. Intisar el Haddad, Ms. Huda Ahmad Abdelal, Ms. Asmaa Aboul Hasan Sayyed Sanusi.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Aida Abdel Karim, leading artist in the field of sculpture. I thank her for sharing her wisdom with me and for giving me emotional support. I would like to express my deep appreciation to renowned journalist and novelist Sekina Fouad for her well-researched articles on Egypt, in which she fought corruption and gave us hope.

I'm blessed to have known my dear four friends and colleagues, Laila el Mahgary, Zeinab Nawwar, Nadia Naqib, and Sahar Aref. Throughout my study years at AUC, they gave me emotional support which was vital in helping me bear many difficulties along the way. During the painful process of writing my thesis, they patiently listened to hours of complaints and confusion. They always bore my low
spirits and gave me wise advice. Their support had a major role in helping me finish writing this thesis in four months. I would also like to thank my friends Ghada Abdel Monem and Isis Plantier for continued support and friendship even though I did not spend enough time with them during my study years.

Finally, words cannot express how grateful I am to my father for his unconditional love and support. No amount of gratitude can ever be enough to repay him for all what he did for me. My father: thank you for always believing in me, encouraging me to seek knowledge, and for paying the fees for all my courses at AUC. Without your financial support, I would not have had the opportunity to study at AUC. I owe you all what I am and all the knowledge I gained. I'm also deeply grateful to my mother for her love, support, and care. I hope you will both forgive me for not spending enough time with you because of my work and study. Thank you for your unending patience. I'm very grateful to my sister, Mona, who suggested that I enroll in AUC to study for the Master's degree. I thank her for her love, support, care, and encouragement.
Abstract

This thesis studies the transformations of architecture and social life in the city of Balat in Dakhla oases in the Western Desert in Egypt. I explore the inhabitants’ conceptions of modernity in relation to architecture and other aspects of social life. I investigate how the prevalent discourses of modernity that the inhabitants encounter through their interaction with state institutions, stay in Cairo, and exposure to media products inform their practices towards architecture and other aspects of social life. Moreover, I investigate how such discourses are received and appropriated by the people of Balat.

I argue that the prevalent discourses on modern architecture and modernity in general, have largely influenced the choices of the people of Balat. These discourses present reinforced concrete buildings as modern and the mud-brick ones as primitive, backward, and old-fashioned. They present the urban architecture and life styles of Cairo and Western countries as modern and superior in contrast to vernacular architecture and rural life styles that are portrayed as backward and inferior. Thus, many people in Balat build their houses either of reinforced concrete or of white limestone bricks, explicitly rationalizing this decision in terms of the modernness and newness of these types. Yet, these discourses do not entirely account for their decisions, as there are other factors that contribute to this choice. Moreover, I show that when the inhabitants accept these discourses; they appropriate some of them to serve symbolic needs. What seems to be blind imitation of the people of Cairo turns out to be rational techniques for presenting the self as modern. Imitation is their rational technique to get ahead in a world that associates the rural with backwardness and the urban with modernity. I also show that the architecture of Old Balat that I view as aesthetically impressive was a rational response to certain conditions and
needs in the past, many of which no longer exist; the changing circumstances and
needs of the people in Balat have produced different architecture that the inhabitants
see as suitable to the present time.

Furthermore, I argue that contrary to the conceptualization in Western thought
of modernity as a condition that is discontinuous with the past and tradition (Harvey,
1989), modernity in Balat reveals that the past and the present, the traditional and the
modern are intertwined. In building their houses in New Balat, the inhabitants adopt
and appropriate newly introduced architectural elements because they are practical
and prestigious, yet, they do not break from their traditions. I show that the
inhabitants of Balat perceive modernity as progress which manifests in experiencing
and adopting all that is new to them, that which improves and renovates their lives,
provided that it does not contradict religion and customs. I investigate how
conceptions of modernity in Balat combine cosmopolitan imaginations of economic
and cultural progress with local traditions and morality. I show how modernity is not
one thing; rather, it is a concept that mediates between the past and future, the local
and the universal.

I show that though the inhabitants' visions of modernity are informed by
several discourses of modernity, they are not passive receivers of these discourses;
they often appropriate them to serve their own purposes. The inhabitants of Balat
selectively appropriate what they consider modern of the ideas, technologies,
lifestyles, and fashion that they get from several sources. I show that though the
majority of the informants view progress as change that is mainly positive, they think
that it has a few negative aspects. Thus, they resort to religion, as well as their
customs and traditions to help them counter the negative aspects of progress. This
reveals that modernization in Balat is far from Westernization or Americanization, a
fact that challenges widespread assumptions of classic social theory. People in Balat see religion as an important part of their lives, and some of them view the increased religiosity in their community as an aspect of progress that goes hand in hand with the other aspects. I argue that conceptions of modernity in Balat reveal that modernity is not an end-point, to which all peoples seek to reach, but some kind of imaginary that mediates between what is local and what is universal.
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Chapter One: Introduction

In search for beautiful natural and architectural scenes, I made a trip to Dakhla oases in February 2004. I had the chance to visit the old village of Balat, famous in the literature for a unique style of architecture. I was taken by the beauty of the style and colors of the houses as well as the whole shape of the village with its winding alleys and roofed narrow streets covered by yellow sand. I had never seen such an architectural style before in rural Egypt. Hivernel (1996) argues though the construction techniques are inherited from ancient Egypt and adopted with little variations, the style of the village and the houses reveals influences from North Africa and the Arab Peninsula. What intrigued me other than the beauty of the style is the interaction between the inhabitants and their environment shown in using natural building materials. I was astonished that the new village of Balat, designated a center and a city (markaz wa madina) in December 2009, and which surrounds Old Balat, differs substantially in style, and that some of its houses are built from reinforced concrete, which seemed to me unsuitable to the climate of an oasis. This made me curious about the inhabitants’ conceptions of modernity; how they are reflected in the way they build their new houses, and how the prevalent discourses of modernity inform their views and life styles, whether they live in Old or New Balat.

Why has the reinforced concrete house become the model and the dream for the majority of the people of Balat? Why have the majority of the inhabitants abandoned the old village gradually from the late 1970s until the present time? Why do most of the inhabitants view reinforced concrete as “better” than mud brick, though the latter ensures them optimum thermal comfort, and the first does not protect them from the harsh heat of the summer or the very cold nights of the winter? To
answer such questions I conducted my ethnographic fieldwork that was required for the course Ethnographic Fieldwork in spring 2004. The results showed that there are many reasons for the transformations, some of which were practical including problems and difficulties related to the construction and maintenance of mud brick houses, while others related to the changing attitudes and conceptions of the inhabitants towards their vernacular architecture and lifestyles in general.

The words "modern" (hadith), “progress” (tatawwur/taqaddum), “new”, (gedid) “urbanization” (tahaddur), “civilization” (hadara), “prestige” (eema), "chic" (chic), “education” (ta'lim) were recurrent on the tongues of the majority of the inhabitants when they explained why they wish to build a new house that is made from reinforced concrete. Those who had high income tended to build such a house, while those of moderate means opted for a white limestone-brick house that adopted the style of the reinforced concrete house. Those who lacked finances, and might care for thermal comfort tended to build a mud-brick house that adopted the style of the reinforced concrete house, which is called "a mud-brick house with a modern style" (beit tub naiy teraz hadith).

One of the findings of my 2004 study is that the concept of modernity underlies Balat residents’ rationalization for their preference of reinforced concrete houses. Building on such findings and reading some theories on modernity, I developed a proposal for my thesis to study conceptions of modernity in Balat. In the thesis, I explore and analyze the inhabitants’ conceptions about modernity in relation to architecture, space, life styles, and social relations. Thus, this thesis attempts to answer the following questions: Which buildings, items or social aspects do the residents consider “modern”, and why? What are the reasons for the emergence of each of the four types of houses that prevail in New Balat, and why do they differ
from the style of houses in Old Balat? What are the aspects of continuity and discontinuity with the architectural past of Balat concerning styles, materials and techniques of building? How do the inhabitants of Old and New Balat organize and use space in their houses? What are the aspects of continuity and discontinuity in the organization and use of space in Old and New Balat? In answering these questions, I present a detailed description of Old and New Balat. I examine why the Old village takes a certain shape, and why New Balat takes a different one. Additionally, I examine Western and state discourses of modernity and investigate whether such various discourses are accepted, refused, internalized, or appropriated by the inhabitants of Balat.

On the one hand, I show in the thesis that the discourses on modern architecture and modernity in general, which the inhabitants of Balat encounter through state policies, media productions, and during their stay in Cairo, have largely influenced the choices of the people of Balat. These discourses present reinforced concrete buildings as modern and the mud-brick ones as primitive, backward, and old-fashioned. They present the urban architecture and life styles of Cairo and Western countries as modern and superior in contrast to vernacular architecture and rural life styles that are portrayed as backward and inferior. Thus, many inhabitants in Balat build their houses either of reinforced concrete or of white limestone bricks, explicitly rationalizing this decision in terms of the modernness and newness of these types. Yet on the other hand, discourses of modernity do not entirely account for their decisions, as there are other factors that contribute to this choice. The vulnerability of mud-brick houses to water leak and heavy rain, the difficulties of mud-brick maintenance, the change in socio-economic conditions in Balat, and the decrease of skilled labor in mud-brick construction are some of such factors. Thus, those who choose to build
their houses with reinforced concrete choose it because they can afford its cost, because it will save them the problems of the mud-brick houses, and because it is presented in the prevalent discourses as a sign for modernity. They and the others who build their houses with white limestone or mud bricks, while giving them the appearance and finishing of the reinforced concrete houses want to present themselves as modern people, who are not less civilized than the others who live in reinforced concrete houses in Cairo.

However, these inhabitants are not blindly accepting these discourses; they appropriate them to serve symbolic needs. What seems to be blind imitation of the people of Cairo turns out to be rational techniques for presenting the self as modern. Imitation is partly about claiming membership in what is perceived as a modern community (Wilson, 1941, as cited in Ferguson, 2006). Thus, by imitating the people of Cairo through living in reinforced concrete houses or in white limestone and mud-brick ones which adopt the modern styles, and furnishing them with Western-style furniture, the inhabitants of Balat dissociate themselves from the stereotypical portrayals of rural people as backward and primitive, and present themselves as civilized modern people, who are worthy of respect, and who have the right to belong to the larger national or cosmopolitan community of modern people. Imitation is their rational technique to get ahead in a world that associates the rural with backwardness and the urban with modernity. In addition, I show that the architecture of Old Balat that I found aesthetically impressive in my first visit in 2004 was a rational response to certain conditions and needs in the past, many of which no longer exist; the changing circumstances and needs of the people in Balat have produced different architecture that the inhabitants see as suitable to the present time.
Moreover, contrary to the conceptualization in Western thought of modernity as a condition that is discontinuous with the past and tradition (Harvey, 1989), as a new era that has no relation with the past, a past that is always seen as stable (Latour, 1993), modernity in Balat reveals that the past and the present, the traditional and the modern are intertwined. As will be shown in chapter three what the inhabitants call "modern" houses in New Balat reveal aspects of continuity with tradition. For example, the local materials and long-established local building techniques that are employed in the construction process of the mud-brick houses and white limestone-brick ones have been enhanced by the use of industrially manufactured materials. Furthermore, even in the reinforced concrete houses whose styles, materials and techniques of building are discontinuous with the architectural traditions of Balat, some aspects of organization and use of space are continuation of local practices established in tradition. This shows us that tradition is far from being static and that modernity is rooted in traditions and continuous with them. The inhabitants adopt and appropriate newly introduced architectural elements because they are practical and prestigious, yet, they do not break from their traditions. It is remarkable that the inhabitants of Balat perceive modernity as progress which manifests in experiencing and adopting all that is new to them, that which improves and renovates their lives, be it new built forms, lifestyles, ideas, public services, appliances, etc. Thus, I investigate how conceptions of modernity in Balat combine cosmopolitan imaginations of economic and cultural progress with local traditions and morality. I show how modernity is not one thing; rather, it is a concept that mediates between the past and future, the local and the universal.

In addition, people in Balat view progress as change that is mainly positive. The most common word they use to refer to modernity is the word "tatawwur"
(progress). Yet, they also use other words such as "taqaddum" (progress); "hadara" (civilization); "tahaddur" (becoming civilized or urbanized); "tamaddun" (becoming urbanized or civilized). I found that the majority of the informants see education, urbanization, and technological developments as central aspects of modernity.

The inhabitants' visions of modernity are informed by several sources, such as state discourses of modernity that they encounter through interaction with government institutions, and through exposure to state sponsored television and radio, as well as discourses of modernity that they experience through their stay in Cairo and through exposure to global media. The inhabitants of Balat internalize some of these discourses, while accept, refuse, and appropriate some others. They are not passive receivers of these discourses; they often appropriate them to serve their own purposes. The inhabitants of Balat selectively appropriate what they consider modern of the ideas, technologies, lifestyles, and fashion that they get from several sources. It is remarkable that the majority of the informants said that any of the words tatawwur, tahaddur, tamaddun, or taqaddum means that one should embrace all that is new which improves their lives, provided that it does not contradict their religious values, customs and traditions.

Though the majority of the informants view progress as change that is mainly positive, they said that it has a few negative aspects. They said that some of the ideas, images, lifestyles that they are exposed to through their stay in Cairo or through watching Egyptian or foreign films threaten their moral values and way of life. Thus, they resort to religion, as well as their customs and traditions to help them counter the negative aspects of progress. This shows us that modernization in Balat is far from Westernization or Americanization, a fact that challenges widespread assumptions of classic social theory, which maintain that processes of modernization in any part of
the world would lead to homogenization (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993). Modernity in Balat gives another example that modernity means different things for different people (Hill, 2010). As Knauft stresses "The process of becoming modern is contested and mediated through alter-native guises. It has been increasingly suggested that modernity is importantly regional, multiple, vernacular, or 'other' in character" (Knauft, 2002, p. 1).

People in Balat see religion as an important part of their lives, and some of them view the increased religiosity in their community as an aspect of progress that goes hand in hand with the other aspects. The inhabitants of Balat do not accept that “progress” or “modernity” necessitates secularization, or taking religion out of the public realm to the private one. This contests the stipulates of Western social theories that predicted that religion will fade away due to processes of modernity, globalization, rationalization, secularization, and neo-liberalization (Berger, 1967; Gauchet, 1997; Weber, 1958, as cited in Hill, under review). For example, the majority of the inhabitants in Balat encourage their daughters to pursue their education and do not mind that they stay at Cairo or Upper Egypt to study at university there; they furthermore allow them to work, considering their education and work as an important aspect of progress. However, all women must wear the veil (hijab); they can follow latest fashions, which is viewed as another aspect of progress, provided they do not wear tight and revealing clothes; they can interact with their male colleagues or workmates at university or work places for study or work matters, but they are instructed not to have chats with them in the streets. Moreover, a few informants even view women's adoption of the full veil (niqab) as an aspect of progress because they believe it is a higher act of devotion and moral commitment. People in Balat show that modernity is not an end-point, to which all peoples seek to
reach, but some kind of imaginary that mediates between what is local and what is universal (chapter four).

**Context**

Balat is part of Dakhla oases, which together with Kharga and Farafra oases constitute the governorate of the New Valley, which lies in the Western desert in the south west part of Egypt. The governorate is divided to five administrative centers (*marakez*) on which a number of surrounding mother villages depend for major services. Other than the recently declared *markaz* of Balat, there are Dakhla, Kharga, Farafra, and Baris (Balat Information Center, 2009). The people of the New Valley come from different origins; being on a crossroad of trade routes, Dakhla and Kharga received immigrants from Upper Egypt, who came to trade or settle, from North Africa, and Sudan, who came to trade, settle, or to raid the oases for wheat, rice, and cattle, and from the Arabian Peninsula (Hivernel, 1996). The distinct and diverse dialects of the people of the oases reflect the plurality of the origin of the inhabitants; thus, each major oasis village has its own distinct dialect. However, some informants say that the influence of North Africa is the most prominent in Balat, especially in architectural style, dialect and vocabulary.

Balat is 756 kilometers far from Cairo; it takes 12 hours by bus to reach Balat. It used to take 32 hours before the highway was finished in 1960. However, the capital has a growing influence on the lives of the people of Balat and on their conceptions about modernity. Most of the inhabitants of Balat go to Cairo at some time to work in foul restaurants, study at university, visit the relatives who reside there, or to shop at the market. The availability of several means of transport compresses the long distance.
The oases of Dakhla lie in depressions that enable agriculture through a soil composed of red and grey clay mixed with sand. Cultivation has always been based on the use of underground water through springs and wells; there is rare rain fall and the climate has the characteristics of hot, arid regions (Hanafi, 2007). In winter, it is warm during the day but very cold at night, temperatures occasionally falling to 4 degrees centigrade or less in December and January. In summer at midday, the temperature may rise up to 50 degrees centigrade in July and August.

Before it was designated as an administrative center and a city in December 2009, Balat was a mother village, on which the surrounding villages and hamlets depended for major services. Thus, it had the privilege of having a secondary school, a hospital, the Bank of Development and Agricultural Credit, a drainage system, and some government departments. Acquiring a city status and a center makes it entitled to have more budget, facilities, services, and government departments in all fields in order to better serve its surrounding villages. Balat and its surrounding villages will eventually stop depending on the city of Mut, the capital of markaz el Dakhla, 35 kilometers from Balat, for benefiting from its major services. As of the 2008 local census, the total number of the inhabitants of markaz Balat is 20,103, all of whom are Muslims, including the inhabitants of the city of Balat, who count 4787 (Balat Information Center, 2009).

The city of Balat consists of two parts: the old village that was built on a low small hill and what used to be the new village that surrounds it on the plains. The old village has a concentric form taking the shape of circles that get bigger from the core to the peripheries. You may easily get lost, as the village is like a labyrinth. Most of the streets are narrow and winding, and many of them are shaded by roofs. All the houses take a vertical direction. They have a ground floor, a first floor, and then the
terrace. They are built from mud brick of red clay and plastered with white mud (see photos n. 1-10).

Old Balat is abandoned by most of its residents, who gradually left it since the mid 1970s, building new houses which surrounded it, constituting a major part of New Balat, whose first buildings were government institutions established in the 1960s. Those few inhabitants who remain are older people who like to stay there or some families who cannot afford to build new houses in New Balat, but dream of building reinforced concrete houses or at least white limestone brick ones. Some of the deserted houses are ruined, as parts of their roofs and walls have fallen down. Unfortunately, these sites have become places, where some inhabitants bring their garbage. The inhabited houses are fortunate to be maintained at least every year. Inhabitants must maintain their houses using natural materials similar to the ones from which the houses are built obeying the rules of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, as Old Balat has been declared a historical site, because some of its houses date back more than 300 years. Informants from different lineages and categories of age said that the people abandoned Old Balat for many reasons. One of the reasons is that the members of the families increased and the houses could not bear the increase anymore; some of the inhabitants had to build new houses. The old houses had small spaces; the rooms were small, and the ceiling was low. People wanted more spacious houses. One of the factors that made the movement possible was the availability of lands at very reasonable prices in the 1970s and 1980s. Another important reason is that people wanted to have running water inside their houses. The supply of piped water was available under the hill to the new houses. In addition, more people went to school and universities; education influenced them in that they wanted to develop their life style; some of the newly married couples preferred to separate from the
extended families' houses in Old Balat to live in an independent house accommodating the nuclear family only.

The city of Balat, previously a village until December 2009, which, for the sake of clarity, I will refer to as New Balat, surrounds the old village from north, east, and west. It has a semi grid shape, where unroofed, somewhat wide straight streets intersect each other (see photos n. 27-28). In contrast with Old Balat that has no government institutions except for the now-abandoned Diwan, the building that used to be the seat of the mayors (see photos n. 13-14), New Balat is characterized by having these institutions (see photos n. 43-50). The main streets that have government institutions overlooking them are paved, while the majority of the streets separating the houses are not. New Balat is characterized by hybridity. Its houses and government buildings include a variety of styles, building materials, and construction techniques, some of which are foreign to the environment. Most of the styles are copied with some variations from the modern styles, which prevail in Mut and in many parts in Cairo.

The majority of the government buildings are built with reinforced concrete, adopting the style of modern standardized architecture. A few government buildings are built from cement, one building from stones, and one from mud bricks, which also adopt the modern standardized style. These are the remaining ones from the first generation of buildings in New Balat in the 1960s and 1970s. Government buildings are either horizontal consisting of one story or vertical consisting of two stories. Government residential buildings are similar, with the exception of a few cubical blocks consisting of four stories (see photos n. 62-64).

The majority of the houses are built from sun dried mud brick, some houses are built from white limestone bricks, and some are built with reinforced concrete (see
photos n. 52, 54). Yet, the number of new houses built with reinforced concrete or white limestone bricks is increasing rapidly, while the number of new houses built with mud-brick is decreasing. The majority of mud-brick houses in New Balat are horizontal consisting of one floor and a terrace. A few mud brick houses take a vertical direction, consisting of a ground floor and a terrace that has one or two rooms. The latter are the first generation to be built in New Balat in the 1970s, when some inhabitants began building new houses surrounding Old Balat. White limestone-brick houses consist of one floor and a terrace. Reinforced concrete houses are vertical consisting of either two or three floors with the possibility of adding one or two other ones.

As in Old Balat, the houses of New Balat are owned by their inhabitants, except for a few government residential buildings, whose apartments are rented to inhabitants, who do not own houses. There are also a few private houses rented to some inhabitants, who still do not have houses of their own.

The main economic activity in the city of Balat is farming. The main crops are wheat, barley, rice, palm trees, and corn, besides clover for the cattle. Some vegetables and fruit are also cultivated, but on a limited scale. The majority of landholders in Balat own parcels of land that range between one to five and five to ten feddans. Farmers take from the harvest the amounts that are needed for the household consumption for a whole year and sell the rest. Farming is accompanied by raising cattle, sheep, and goats to be sold to acquire cash. Moreover, farming is generally combined by off-farm occupations. Thus, many farmers are also government employees, teachers, craftsmen, owners of shops, and technicians. Those who do not work in agriculture combine a government job or teaching with other occupations, such as plumbing, driving, painting, or running a shop. As for women, some of them
are housewives, especially the uneducated aged and middle aged ones, or those who have only primary or preparatory education certificates. Some of those who hold certificates of technical diplomas are unemployed, thus they stay at home waiting for a government job or marriage, and some of them have found opportunities for work in the shops that were opened in the last two years. As for female university graduates, some work as school teachers if they graduated from faculties of education or as government employees; others are unemployed, waiting for marriage or a government job. Almost all of the women raise chicken, ducks, and rabbits mainly for family consumption.

High rates of unemployment in Dakhla oases leads the majority of the young male inhabitants to migrate to Cairo, other cities, or to other countries for work. In Balat, the majority of the youth travel to Cairo to work mainly in foul and falafel (fava bean and fried fava bean balls) restaurants owned by their relatives, neighbors, or other fellow villagers who settled in Cairo. Those who migrate are approximately between 14-30 years old. Some of them are students who work in the summer. Others have technical diplomas or university degrees. The work in foul and falafel restaurants has the advantage of lending itself to quick mastery of the skills of the profession in addition to yielding good money. Some also work as peddlers of foul using special carriages that are placed in populous areas. Migrants stay in Cairo for several years, but often visit their families in Balat during the feasts of al Fetr and al Adha. Some of the migrants settle in Cairo; others go back to Balat if they get a government job. They would also come back if they acquired enough money to build a house for marriage and buy a piece of land to farm, open a shop, or invest their money in any of the previously mentioned activities.
As will be shown in the following chapters, especially with more detail in chapter two, the various aspects of the context of Balat have contributed to how the inhabitants perceive modern architecture and modernity in general. Their conceptions of modernity and progress are to an extent influenced by the changes in their socio-economic conditions which manifest in spread of university education, government jobs, diversification of sources of income, as well as they are influenced by the supply of public services, the existence of reinforced concrete government buildings around, and their experience of the architecture and lifestyles of Cairo during their stay there. All of these and others which will be detailed in the following chapters have contributed to how the inhabitants view themselves as members of a larger modern community.

**Theoretical Framework**

My analysis of the data is guided by the theoretical perspectives that critically address the question of modernity. Latour (1993) criticizes Western notions of modernity that presented it as a new era that has no relation with the past, a past that is always seen as stable. He challenges modernity theories’ definitions of tradition as something archaic and stable. He contends that any tradition is in a process of continuous change. The past can be a component of the present and the future in many different and complex ways; it is not absolutely repeated nor completely ignored. In chapter three, I demonstrate how in their efforts to have more durable and comfortable houses, the inhabitants of Balat have been active in adopting and adapting newly introduced architectural elements without abandoning their traditions. This manifests in the ways they have built and renovated their mud-brick or white limestone-brick houses, where newly introduced building techniques and materials have enhanced local materials and long-established building techniques. Moreover, though the
reinforced concrete houses show aspects of rupture from the architectural past of Balat, the ways the inhabitants organize and use space in these houses reveal continuity with tradition.

Moreover, Ferguson (2006) states that anthropologists have criticized and discredited the meta-narratives of modernity that defined the path to modernization as a linear evolutionist one that must be guided by Western experience and meanings of progress; as their ethnographies reveal, change or becoming modern takes various paths and directions in relation to each place’s specific history, context, and dynamics. However, these ethnographies also show that the people the anthropologists study tend to believe in some of the ideas of these narratives, especially the idea of progress; they think that progress towards a better life is to be achieved through modernization.

Yet in Africa, modernity has always been a matter not simply of past and present, but also of up and down. The aspiration to modernity has been an aspiration to rise in the world in economic and political terms; to improve one's way of life, one's standing, one's place-in-the-world. Modernity has thus been a way of talking about global inequality and about material needs and how they might be met. In particular, it has indexed specific aspirations to such primary "modern" goods as improved housing, health care, and education (Ferguson, 2006, p. 32).

As I show in chapters three and four, informants in Balat perceive modernity as a process of progress that leads to improving their lives and consider the spread of education, urbanization, and technological developments as central aspects of modernity. Moreover, they consider having reinforced concrete houses, electrical appliances, and Western-style furniture that is brought from Cairo as aspects of modern life because through them they have a better standard of living, enjoy material comforts, and feel that they are members of the larger community of modern people.

However, if the inhabitants' visions of modernity are informed by the prevalent discourses of modernity that they encounter through their interaction with
state institutions, exposure to Egyptian and Western media products, and through their stay in Cairo, they selectively appropriate some of these discourses to serve their own needs within their particular context. They selectively appropriate what they consider modern in ways that do not contradict their religious values, customs, and traditions. Modernization in Balat has not led to Westernization or Americanization, demonstrating the falseness of classic social theories that assume that processes of modernization in any part of the world would lead to homogenization (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993). Modernist ideals get indigenized in many different ways producing indigenous modernities, where people modernize in particular ways within their traditions (Hosagrahar, 2005). As I show in chapters three and four, conceptions of modernity in Balat combine cosmopolitan imaginations of economic and cultural progress with local traditions and morality. I show how modernity is not an endpoint, to which all peoples seek to reach, but some kind of imaginary that mediates between what is local and what is universal, the past and the future.

Furthermore, in her critique of the meta-narratives of modernity, Hosagrahar (2005) reveals the close links between modernity and colonialism. She states that the colonial west monopolized the definition of modernity, portraying it as having one valid version, that of the west. She contends that colonial Western discourses constituted an opposition between the modern and the traditional, portraying the west as modern and the non-west as traditional. She maintains that the traditional and the modern are not essentialized characteristics in architecture; rather they are politically and socially constructed categories by a colonial Western discourse. In the field of architecture, the colonial west viewed the architecture of Asia and Africa as characterized by primitiveness, irrationality, and changelessness. I argue that the Egyptian state, professors in faculties of engineering, senior officials, and the
common people have internalized the colonial views of the west concerning modern architecture to the degree that mud-brick architecture is seen as primitive and irrational (chapter three).

I argue that the sweeping belief that equates reinforced concrete construction with modernity in Balat, as well as in other rural areas in Egypt, and that equates mud-brick construction with backwardness may be a result of the state’s discourses about modernity and its actual policies concerning architecture. These discourses present reinforced concrete buildings as modern and the mud-brick ones as primitive, backward, and old-fashioned. In chapter three, I show how state discourses on modern architecture, which are informed by Western ones, largely influence the choices of the people of Balat concerning the types of houses they build. I furthermore argue that the reproduction of these discourses have served the interests of certain groups, especially the Egyptian businessmen who own factories that produce the building materials for reinforced concrete construction. Before the revolution of 25 January, 2011, some of these businessmen had close relations with the Egyptian government and some of them were members of the Parliament and the government. They proposed and promoted policies and projects that served their interests. As Foucault (2001) states, truth is a created reality produced in the form of discourse, which has relations of power with its producing structures. Economic and political structures largely dominate the production and circulation of truth. Moreover, as cited in Zieleniec (2007), Foucault argues that in industrialized societies the dominant political and economic structures produced and diffused disciplinary discourses and techniques of knowledge/power aiming at creating obedient subjects who conformed to the values, rules, and norms of the bourgeoisie in order to ensure the continuity of the process of capitalist production and accumulation.
However, as I also show in chapter three, the prevalent discourses on modern architecture do not entirely account for the decisions of the inhabitants who choose to build their houses with reinforced concrete. There are many practical reasons that the informants cited, such as the durability of reinforced concrete houses, their easy maintenance, and other reasons that are detailed in chapter three. Moreover, many anthropologists in the present time reveal through their ethnographic research that though discourses of large structures and institutions inform peoples' practices, people engage with such discourses in ways that serve their own purposes. As Hill (under review) reveals in his ethnographic study of the Mauritanian village of Maatamoulana, the leaders and many inhabitants of that village interact with global discourses and institutions in ways that enable them to use them for the benefit of their community, using resources from “liberal” and “secular” institutions to support Bedouin customs and Islamic governance.

Similarly, I show in chapters three and four how the conceptions of modernity and practices of the people of Balat are informed by discourses of modernity that they encounter through their interaction with state institutions, exposure to state television and global media, as well as through their stay in Cairo, and how such discourses are not received as a whole to be completely accepted or rejected. The inhabitants of Balat accept some of the ideas of such discourses, refuse some, and reformulate or appropriate others to serve their own needs and purposes. For example, apart from the many practical reasons, when the informants who choose to build a reinforced concrete house say that they choose it because it is "modern", "chic", "clean", "the fashion of these days" and "prestigious", which are the words used in the prevalent discourses on modern architecture to describe the reinforced concrete house, this shows that they are using these discourses to serve symbolic needs. They appropriate
these discourses to present themselves as civilized respectable people who have the right to belong to the larger community of modern people.

One other study that shows how people selectively appropriate the discourses on modern architecture, as well as modern techniques of building to serve their needs is Zuniga’s study of the rural town *Vila Branca* in Portugal (2001). The author describes the transformations of the houses of the town in the continuous process of modernizing them by their inhabitants. Zuniga analyzes such transformations by relating them to the wider contexts of local, national, and global changes. One important factor is the influence of the global economy that produces and promotes modern designs and techniques of building, as well as mass-produced building materials. Another factor is the efforts of the state to improve the houses of the working and middle classes making them clean, healthy, and developed.

Zuniga (2001) reveals that though the inhabitants of Vila Branca, in their efforts to modernize their houses, were influenced by the global uniform designs and building techniques, they selectively appropriated the newly introduced architectural forms to meet their needs and reproduce their class and gender identities. The residents' apparent disregard for vernacular techniques and local building materials and the uniform styles of modern houses could not completely homogenize lifestyles and the way domestic space is used, as there are many variations among the inhabitants in the way they use their domestic space. As will be shown in chapter three, this applies to Balat in that though the reinforced concrete houses show some aspects of homogenization due to global and urban influences, certain practices in the division and use of space reveal indigenous rural lifestyles.

To sum up, such theories suggest that though Western and state discourses of modernity influence people's conceptions of modernity, aiming at instilling certain
meanings of modernity, people do not always accept all such meanings. Furthermore, when people do accept such meanings, they appropriate them to serve their needs and purposes according to their specific context. This thesis investigates to which extent Balat people's conceptions of modernity in general and choices of newly introduced forms of architecture and uses of space in particular are informed by the discourses they encounter through their interaction with state institutions, exposure to local and global media, and through their stay in Cairo, and to which extent such choices reflect their agency in selectively appropriating what they consider "modern" to serve their practical purposes, whether material or symbolic.

Methods

This research project followed a much longer relationship with people in Balat that started in February, 2004. I entered Balat as a Cairene tourist, who was interested in seeing the architecture of the old village. I was fortunate to meet two inhabitants from Balat by chance who kindly offered to show me around the old village, when I told them about my interest as a tourist and a radio announcer to see its unique architecture, as part of my wider interest in knowing and making programs about the natural and cultural heritage of Egypt. Thus, Safwat, a young scholar, who was studying to have his master’s degree in Agro-science, and Ashgan a young lady, who worked as an employee in the Secondary School of Balat guided me through the village.

I was impressed by the architectural style of Old Balat, and asked why many inhabitants in New Balat disregarded their architectural heritage adopting new styles that seemed to me disharmonious with its natural setting. My two guides answered that people wanted to develop their lifestyles by having new modern houses. I was astonished to hear such an answer. As someone who appreciates beauty and as a
radio announcer who is interested in cultural heritage, I was shocked to see how the people of the place do not appreciate their architectural heritage, which I see as beautiful and unique. However, as a graduate student of Anthropology, who learned from pioneer anthropologists like Geertz that to understand a social phenomenon we should "see things from the actor's point of view" (Geertz, 1973, p. 14), I decided to come back to Balat to conduct ethnographic research about that issue applying the research methods I studied in the course on ethnographic fieldwork. Thus, I came back in the following April and conducted research on the transformations of architecture in Balat and the attitudes of its inhabitants towards "traditional" and "modern" architecture there.

Ashgan and Safwat, the two people who guided me through my tour in February, became my key informants, who with many others enriched my research through the interviews I conducted with them. This research was preliminary and exploratory, which gave me rich data about the practical and symbolic reasons for the move towards reinforced concrete houses and the new styles that the inhabitants considered "modern". The results of my research posed questions about the larger forces that limit and enable people's choices about the types of houses they build. For example, how were their decisions influenced by state and Western discourses of modernity that promote standardization of architecture and urban life styles? How did people react to such structures and discourses through their agency? To answer such questions I resorted to the theoretical works that address the question of modernity and its meta-narratives to help me design a more in-depth research for my master's thesis, in which I build on my previous research in Balat.

I visited Balat again in 2006 during my visit to Dakhla. During that visit, I met my key informants and some other informants who had participated in my
research in 2004 and who welcomed my visit. Coming back in August, November, and December 2009 to conduct fieldwork for my thesis, I met the informants I knew before, but widened my sample to include many others, whom I was to meet for the first time.

I adopted the hermeneutic method, which means trying to understand a social phenomenon through knowing the point of view and explanation of the people who participate in such a phenomenon (Michrina & Richards, 1996). Thus, my research was based on conducting ethnographic fieldwork for two and a half months, mainly in Balat, and occasionally in the city of Mut. Fieldwork was conducted over two phases. During the first phase from August 10 to August 20, 2009, I reintroduced myself to some families I knew before. I toured Old Balat refreshing my knowledge about its architecture and remaining inhabitants. I toured New Balat to trace the new developments in its architecture, know its size and borders, and to identify the government institutions and services. I inquired about the main lineages in the village; who lives where, owning what, and doing what? I conducted preliminary interviews with some informants, which informed me about the developments that Balat witnessed in recent years. This phase laid the basis for the next phase of research, adding new perspectives and research questions to address the realities from the field. It was in the second phase of fieldwork that the main bulk of research was conducted, the details of which will follow. This phase begins from November 3, 2009 to January 1, 2010.

Sample of buildings

Through direct observation of different types of houses and government buildings, I noticed continuities and discontinuities and documented them by field notes and photography. Though my sample of buildings in Old and New Balat did not represent
the actual numbers of each type of buildings, it represented all the types. Thus, I
made a sample of 60 houses, 16 of which are in Old Balat and 44 in New Balat. The
sample of Old Balat included inhabited as well as uninhabited houses that belong to
different families from various lineages. The sample of New Balat included houses
that have different styles and building materials, and that are inhabited by residents
from various families coming from various lineages.

Sample of the informants

This sample also does not represent the actual number of the inhabitants of Balat, yet,
it was designed to represent voices and attitudes from various social classes. It
included informants who live in Old and New Balat, and who live in different types of
houses. It included men and women of various ages, educational backgrounds,
professions, and lineages. The sample consisted of 163 inhabitants of Balat. Ten of
the 163 informants are senior government officials having government positions in
Balat itself.

Selection of informants

Informants were selected according to the design of the sample. I acquired
knowledge about the lineages of the village through the main reference on Balat,
which is Jacques Hivernel's book, *Balat, Etude Ethnologique d’une Communaute
Rural* (1996). I asked the first key informant I knew in 2004 about the names of the
members of some of these lineages. He introduced me to several members of his
lineage. I introduced myself to some of the members of some other lineages. I met
some informants by chance, who belonged to some other lineages. Thus, through the
research period I had five key male informants and one key female informant from
different lineages, all of whom I consulted and asked to help me meet other informants, whom I also asked to lead me to others to continue my sample.

Data Gathering

I gathered data through participant observation, informal, semi-structured and structured interviewing. During the period of research, I could not reside in Balat, because there are no hotels there. Though a few informants offered to let me stay at their houses, I preferred to stay in a hotel at Mut, and commuted to Balat and its environs either by private pickups or by informal taxis (private cars, whose owners rent it as a taxi to supplement the income they get from the government job), since transportation between Mut and Balat is irregular and stops before sunset. I would come to Balat in the morning and leave at night, spending half or whole days with the informants at their houses. I found that this gave me a very good opportunity to practice participant observation and interviewing while keeping some room for privacy and time to read my field notes and studies related to my topic. With this, I, to a reasonable extent, avoided the question, whom did you meet today, or whom do you want to meet? This way I evaded those informants who wanted to control my research, or wanted to prevent me from meeting people they did not like. Yet, there were exceptions, when I spent a night in a family's house, when it was difficult to find a driver to take me back to Mut.

I concentrated on observing how space is used in different types of houses to see similarities, differences, continuities, and discontinuities in the use of space in old and new houses. Observations included the interior design, furniture, and items inside houses. I also observed social interaction among nuclear family members and their relatives and neighbors.
My interviews with the informants were about their narratives of change and conceptions of modernity in relation to architecture, social relations, lifestyles, education, and relations between men and women. I asked about their experience of urban life in Cairo and explored their conceptions of Cairo and Western countries as modern spaces. I asked them about their views on the role of religion in contemporary life and the issue of *niqab* (a veil covering the whole body and face), since the number of *munaaqabat* (fully veiled women) has increased since my first research in 2004. I furthermore asked them about their preferred satellite channels and their preferred programs. I did not record my interviews by a tape recorder, as transcription would consume a lot of time. I wrote my questions and the answers of the informants word by word. This saved me the time of transcription and made it easy for me to refer to the content of the interviews, whenever I needed to review them. The names of the informants that are mentioned in the thesis are all pseudo ones to ensure protecting the informants from any future harm.

*Position of the ethnographer*

Being a female researcher helped me blend with the people of Balat easily. The majority of the informants found no problem in receiving and showing me around at their houses. I had the opportunity to have access to both female and male informants, which helped me to have a balanced sample that gave me important data from both women and men, enabling me to have a good idea about how gender affects the attitudes towards mud-brick and reinforced concrete houses. Additionally, as a female researcher I had the advantage to move freely inside the house, which gave me very good opportunity for participant observation concerning how space is used, especially by women. Sometimes I practiced observation, while I was helping in housework or in cooking. On the other hand, I often interviewed men in the living
room, sometimes in the fields, or in their work place (senior government officials). However, for some informants, being a female researcher was something unusual. They expressed their astonishment about my coming alone, not accompanied by colleagues from university or one of my family members. They asked me about my parents and if I have brothers and sisters, and why I am not married until the present time. Some informants expressed their opinion that marriage is more important than studying for the master’s degree and advised me not to forget marriage.

Moreover, curiosity was a major factor that facilitated my access to many informants. Many people in Balat were curious and willing to talk to me. They were content and amazed at the same time that a researcher from Cairo, their model for modernity, traveled all this distance, because she was interested in their village. Another factor that also made it easier for me to have easy access to some informants is being a radio announcer. To them it was something unique to meet a radio announcer. Moreover, a few informants were willing to participate in my research assuming that I may be of benefit to them, had they needed connections in Cairo for some matters.

Knowing that I visited Balat before, being introduced to the inhabitants through key informants, and circulation of news about my activity in such a small community made my task of meeting new informants not very difficult. Generally, the majority of the informants were friendly, welcoming and co-operative.

Though I was not veiled during my several visits to Balat up until August 2009, I found it a must that I cover my hair during my following visit in November and December. In 2004 and 2006, the debate about the veil and niqab was not that recurrent as it became in the following years. Coming to Balat for a few days in August, 2009, I met a few informants, one of whom advised me strongly to wear the
veil as an obligatory act for a good Muslim woman. As it was too hot to wear long sleeve shirts and a veil in a temperature that reached 50 degrees, I could not take such an advice, as I have low blood pressure in hot climates, and because the informants I met so far did not talk to me about this issue. Besides, I felt people should not force me to do something I’m not convinced of. Yet, when I returned for a long visit in November and December of the same year, several informants talked to me about the importance of the veil as an obligatory act, and about the moral space in Balat that does not allow women to go bareheaded. Under this pressure, and as the weather grew cold, I changed my mind and put a loose veil on my head, as some informants would not accept me unless I covered my hair.

To conclude, through ethnography, the hermeneutic method, and theories on modernity, I tried to understand the social phenomenon of the disregard for vernacular styles, techniques, and building materials, as well as the move towards reinforced concrete buildings in Balat. I explored people’s conceptions of modernity that partly inform their choices of the types of buildings they build and the lifestyles they adopt. I examined how such conceptions and practices are influenced by the discourses of modernity they encounter through their interaction with state institutions and policies, exposure to local and global media, and through their stay in Cairo. At the same time, I examined how people react to such discourses and policies through their agency.

In the following chapter, I present some aspects of the architectural, historical, and social contexts of Balat. I present some of the events, institutions, and public services that the informants view as having played important roles in modernizing Balat. I show how the various aspects of the context of Balat have contributed to how the inhabitants perceive modern architecture and modernity in general. In chapter three, I describe the types of houses in Old and New Balat in detail, showing the
reasons for the emergence of each type. I explain why increasing numbers of the inhabitants have turned to the reinforced concrete type and the white limestone one, revealing how this results from the interaction of many factors. I show to what extent their choices are informed by the prevalent discourses of modernity, and to what extent such choices come as responses to the problems that mud brick houses suffer from. Furthermore, I show how people have been active agents in appropriating some of the discourses of modernity to serve their own needs. In chapter four, I present the inhabitants' conceptions of modernity concerning other aspects of social life besides architecture. I show not only how the people are to an extent informed by the prevalent discourses of modernity, but also how they appropriate some of these discourses and selectively adopt and adapt what they consider modern to serve their own purposes, whether material or symbolic.
Chapter Two: Balat: place, people, and history

In this chapter, I present some aspects of the architectural, historical, and social contexts of Balat. I show why Old Balat takes a certain shape, and why New Balat takes a different one. I present some of the events, institutions, and public services that the informants view as having played important roles in modernizing Balat. Furthermore, I portray some aspects of daily life there to give a feel of the place and the community. The shape of the old village, which intrigued me as a tourist in my first visit and still impresses me aesthetically, was a response to certain conditions and needs in the past, many of which do not exist in the present time. The changes in the material, political, economic and social conditions of Balat have produced a different shape for New Balat. Moreover, as will be demonstrated in detail in the following chapter, these changes as well as other factors have contributed to the production of different types of houses. The changes in the architecture of Balat and people's conceptions of modernity there are closely related to the process of modernization initiated by the state which the informants said began with the initiation of the New Valley project in 1959. Since then and up until the present time the state has gradually supplied the New Valley Governorate with utilities, facilities and services that have led to creating new possibilities and needs for organizing space and that have dramatically changed many aspects of life in the oases. Moreover, the state introduction of modern architecture, the urban lifestyles of the government employees coming from Cairo and Upper Egypt to run the affairs of Dakhla in the 1960s and 1970s, the influence of state television and radio, inhabitants' increased communication with Cairo, and global media have contributed to how they perceive modernity and desire types of houses that are different from those of Old Balat and that serve their needs which differ profoundly from their ancestors'.
The first questions that cross one’s mind when visiting Old Balat, which is almost depopulated as most of the inhabitants built new houses in New Balat and the surrounding hamlets and villages or settled in Cairo, are about its shape. Why was it built on a small hill? Why does it have a concentric shape and narrow, winding streets? Why are its houses vertical and why are they leaning on each other? Older and middle-aged informants from different lineages explained that Old Balat was built on a high elevation of land to have protection against the recurrent raids from Bedouins of North Africa, and some tribes from Sudan, who raided Dakhla for wheat, rice, and cattle. Such raids were recurrent in the middle ages and are said to have stopped towards the end of 19th century, when Britain invaded Egypt and a security system was established in these periphery areas. The high position of the village also protects it from the rainwater that concentrates in the lower lands. For protection also, the village was surrounded by a walled fence, which was the blind rear walls of the houses at the perimeter of the village. The fence had four wooden gates that were closed after the evening prayer (esha) until the dawn prayer (fajr). Now, there are no gates, and there are several openings in the fence, some of whose outer parts constitute the walls of other houses extending on the perimeter of the village.

Amer, the first man from Balat to graduate from the Faculty of Engineering, Asyout University, and to become an architect explained to me that the concentric shape of the village resulted from the contour of the small hill; he thinks that people built their houses, following the semi circular shape of the hill. He said that the streets are narrow and winding to increase the amount of shade and coolness. Other informants added that the circular narrow winding streets were mechanisms for
defense; the attackers, being strangers to the place would get lost in the streets, and would be easily caught by the residents.

Older and middle-aged informants said that the reason why the houses take a vertical shape having two floors and a terrace lies in the limited space on the small hill, on which all the houses had to be built inside the walled fence. Nobody could build a house outside the gates because of the security requirements. As for the reason why the houses lean on and support each other, informants said that the space on the hill was limited, and that sharing the walls saved their grandparents the effort and cost of building separate walls, besides, this arrangement of shared walls had the advantage of minimizing the amount of heat entering the houses. It is remarkable that this technique of sharing walls is also prevalent in many villages in Middle and Upper Egypt, which indicates that it might be inherited from ancient Egypt. As Hivernel (1996) states, the construction techniques of the houses of Old Balat were inherited from ancient Egypt and adopted with little variations, while the style of the village and the houses reveals influences from North Africa and the Arab Peninsula.

Mr. Abdel Hakim, a 51-year-old informant from Zakhira lineage has an account on the architecture of the old village that agrees with part of the account of Hivernel. He said that the style of Old Balat, which is recurrent, with some

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1 Archaeological discoveries from Dakhla and Balat confirm that Dakhla was under the control of the Egyptian state in the late Old Kingdom (2400 BC). One of the historical sites that attest to that is the one discovered by Egyptian archaeologist and Egyptologist Ahmad Fakhry in Balat in 1970. He discovered *mastabas* (tombs) that date back to the sixth dynasty that belonged to the governors of the oases [in the area known as Dabba castles in the east of Balat] (Hivernel, 1996).
variations, in the other old villages of Dakhla, such as Mut, el Qasr, and el Qalamun, is to a large degree influenced by the style of villages of the oases in North Africa, and to a lesser degree by the style of villages of the oases in the Arabian Peninsula.

As I previously mentioned, throughout the ages, the oases of the Western Desert continued to witness the influx of people coming from North Africa, Arabian Peninsula, Sudan, and Upper Egypt, who all mingled together. Mr. Abdel Hakim’s account is supported by research that Shehab conducted on the architecture of el Qasr and Balat in Dakhla, and Shali in Siwa oasis, in comparison to the architecture of some of the oases of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. One example is the architecture of Ghardaya oasis in Algeria (Shehab, 2009).

It is worth mentioning that the title el Qasaba that one of the villages of Balat has, originates from Algeria and the other North African countries. In my visit to Algeria in 2007, I visited the old part of the Capital Algiers, which is called el Qasaba, and I visited the old parts of the cities of Wahran and Telemsan. I noticed the astonishing similarity of the shape of these old cities and the villages of Dakhla oases and the village of Shali in Siwa oasis. Similarities were present in building the cities or villages on hills, having a concentric shape, with circular, narrow, winding streets, the houses taking vertical direction, leaning on and supporting each other, with a fence surrounding the village or the city, with the gates that close in the evening.

Mr. Abdel Hakim remarks that the dialect and some vocabulary, especially that which name parts of the village and the house in Old Balat shows North African influences. For example, he said the *saqifa*, which is the roofed part of the street, under which people would sit in the shade, comes from North Africa. The *saqifa* also refers to that room that is the first that one encounters when entering from the door of the house in Old Balat, which has the function of a living room that receives relatives.
or neighbors of the family. Moreover, he said that the pronunciation of the Arabic letter qaf is prevalent in Balat, which also reveals North African influences. The dialect and some vocabulary are completely different from their counterparts in other parts of Egypt. I noticed that older residents, especially women, use such dialect and vocabulary, however, due to education, television influence, going to university and working in Cairo, younger generations rarely use the distinct dialect and vocabulary of Balat.

Different informants from various lineages and categories of age said that the heart of the village is the oldest part. It contains two springs that are dry now. They are Ayn Allama and Ayn Qabala. Near each spring, a mosque was constructed holding the name of the spring. The Mosque of Ayn Allama overlooks the street that used to be the basin of the spring. This street is the widest one in Old Balat, which hindered it from being roofed. Informants also recounted that the village was composed of neighborhoods; each had members of one lineage residing in it, or the artisans of a certain craft and their families. Thus, the village had doroub, plural of darb, and haraat, plural of hara. A darb is an alley that has a big door that separates it from the exterior. On both sides of the alley exist the houses of one lineage. For example, there is darb Zakhira, for the lineage of Zakhira in the west part of the village (see photo n. 11) and darb el Khatayba, known as el Amoud (the column) for the lineage of elKhatayba in the north part of the village (see photo n.15). Adjacent to darb el Khatayba, there is the Diwan, which was the seat of the mayors, who belonged to el Khatayba (see photos n. 13-14). The big door of each darb is made from acacia wood and has a wooden lintel. The lintel is made from acacia or olive wood. On the lintel, verses of Quran, invocations, the name of the owner and his
genealogy, the year of the construction of the house, some artistic shapes, the name of the carpenter, and the name of the writer of the text are carved (see photos n. 12, 16).

There were *doroub* for the artisans, such as *darb el naggareen* (carpenters) in the heart of the village near Ayn Allama mosque, and *darb el haddadeen* (the blacksmiths) in the south part of the village. A *hara* is also an alley that used to have a door separating it from the exterior, but does not exist anymore. The *haraat* contained houses on both sides. Hivernel (1996) states that the *haraat* may have developed as extensions of the *doroub*, when they became too crowded to have other inhabitants, or they may have included families from various lineages who worked as peasants in the lands of the two big land owning families of *Zakhira* and *el Khatayba*.

Each lineage or large family had its own mill that was made by the carpenter. The mill was run by a cow, and was situated in a special mud-brick room that was adjacent to the owner’s house. There were also one or two machines for pressing olive oil made by the carpenter. There was no market in the village. There were four small shops that used to sell sugar, tea, soap, cheap candy for children, gas for gas lamps…etc. Such shops were extensions of the houses of their owners, taking the shape of openings in the outer walls, with wooden doors overlooking the streets. They were established in the 1970s.

As for the borders of the village, informants from different lineages said that from the east, it was bordered by the lands cultivated by the water coming from Ayn Ismaeel that was situated northeast of the village, which is owned by the family of *el Khatayba*. This spring became dry from a long time, which ended the cultivation east of the village. These lands were sold in the 1970s and 1980s to some villagers who built their new houses on them. From the west, the village was bordered by the lands cultivated by Ayn Berka, which is owned by the family of *haddadeen* (blacksmiths).
This spring also became dry since a long time ending the cultivation of its near lands, which were also sold to co-villagers in 1970s and 1980s to build their new houses. The north border was a cemetery that was transferred to the south of the village in the 1960s in order to make room for a mosque and government institutions. The south border was and still the south cemetery.

**New Balat**

New Balat has a different shape from Old Balat. In contrast to the concentric shape of the old village, New Balat has a semi grid shape. Unlike the narrow winding streets of Old Balat, streets in New Balat are wide and straight. The majority of mud-brick houses in New Balat are horizontal while all the houses in Old Balat are vertical. Informants say that the reasons for the different shape of New Balat lie in that the circumstances that produced the shape of the old village no longer existed. Concentrating all the houses on a hill, the concentric shape, and the narrow winding streets were to an extent defense mechanisms against the attackers who raided the oases in the past. Moreover, as everybody had to build their houses inside the walled fence of the village, and as the space was limited, houses had to have a vertical direction. The semi grid shape of New Balat resulted from the wide streets that intersect each other. Streets were designed following modern standards to be wide enough to allow the movement of different kinds of vehicles including fire engines and ambulance. As for the horizontal shape of the majority of the mud-brick houses in New Balat, informants said that when people started to build their new houses in the second half of the 1970s, there were plenty of lands at reasonable prices, which made no need to direct their houses vertically. However, all the reinforced concrete houses that the inhabitants have been building since the second half of the 1980s take the vertical direction, due to the decrease of lands and the increase of their prices.
The New Valley Project

New Balat came into existence following the initiation of the New Valley project by President Nasser in 1959. Approximately 300 meters north of Old Balat the government established some institutions on both sides of the road that connected Dakhla and Kharga oases with Asyout governorate. This road was asphalted for the first time in 1960. The first establishments were a medical unit, the Agricultural Co-operative, and a primary school. They had the shape of cubical one-story buildings adopting modern standardized styles. The medical unit was built from reinforced concrete, while the Agricultural Co-operative and the school were built from mud brick with stone foundations. The project of the New Valley aimed at reclaiming the arable lands of the oases of Kharga, Dakhla and Farafra by using the underground water of the Western desert. Nasser aimed at creating a new valley parallel to the Nile valley in order to achieve self-sufficiency in food production to face the increase of population. The government dug deep wells using modern techniques, reclaimed the lands, brought tractors and farm machinery for co-operative use, and gave a number of landless farmers five feddans and a cow (el Gohary, 1963).

The majority of the informants view that project as one important achievement of Nasser and consider it an important factor in modernizing agriculture and the society in Balat. Informants who received land parcels maintained that owning small portions of land liberated them from having to work in the lands of the two big landowners of Zakhira and el Khatayba in return for what they considered as unfair

2 Depth of wells ranged between 300-800 meters, while the depth of the springs ranged between 20-120 meters, as they get their water from the surface layer of the ground.
payment for their effort. They said that the income from the five feddans greatly improved their standard of living and enabled them to educate their children. Moreover, those who did not receive five feddans and continued to cultivate the lands of the two big land owning families as share croppers benefited from the agricultural reforms of the 1960s, which entailed that they have half of the harvest instead of the one third they used to have before.

Furthermore, for running the New Valley project and the newly established institutions the government constructed administrative and residential buildings that adopted modern standardized styles, and brought agricultural engineers, government employees, and many professionals from Cairo and Upper Egypt. As will be shown in detail in chapter three, the urban architecture and the urban lifestyles of the government officials have contributed to shaping the inhabitants conceptions concerning modern architecture and modernity in general. The inhabitants began to feel that the urban architecture and lifestyles are superior to theirs and that they are signs for modernity, which made them gradually emulate these to present themselves as civilized people who can identify themselves as members of the larger national community of modern people.

The Highway

As mentioned above, the highway that connects Dakhla oases to Kharga oases and Asyout governorate approximately lies 300 meters north of Old Balat. Informants stressed that paving the road in 1960 was a major event that positively and greatly affected their lives. They said that paving the road and the supply of public buses ended their relative isolation from the rest of the country. They said that before paving the road migration to Cairo was limited, and those who migrated to Cairo to work in foul restaurants would either settle there or stay there for long periods before
they come back. The means of transportation were limited and very uncomfortable. Older informants said that to go to Cairo they used to ride lorries with agricultural products and cattle to Kharga, reaching it after ten hours (the journey takes two and a half hour now by public or micro buses), and from there took a merchandise train fueled with coal to *el Mouasla* in Suhag in Upper Egypt. They said that it was a very slow train that reached Upper Egypt after twelve hours (the journey takes three hours now by public or micro buses). From there they took another train with wooden seats to Cairo reaching it after ten hours (the journey takes five hours now by train, public or micro buses).

They stressed that the paved highway and the availability of public buses gave them the opportunity to have easy access to Cairo and Upper Egypt, which dramatically changed their lives. They enabled the majority of the male inhabitants between the ages of 14 and 30 to work in *foul* restaurants in Cairo, which has provided them with good monetary income that supplements the income from agriculture. This monetary income has contributed to improving their living standards. It has enabled them to build houses in New Balat and buy electrical appliances. Moreover, this income helped the university students who work in the summer to cover the education and accommodation expenses in Cairo or Upper Egypt. The asphalt road and the availability of better means of transportation have been important factors among others to encourage parents to allow both their sons and daughters to pursue their education at university. In addition, through the highway new building materials, equipment, and tools have been brought to Balat, which have contributed to changing its architecture. Finally, as will be detailed in chapters three and four, the increased communication with Cairo introduced the inhabitants to new
ideas and urban built forms and lifestyles, which have influenced the way they use space and perceive modernity.

**Governance**

On both sides of the highway, the main government institutions are situated, plus some houses and a few shops that sell mobile phones, grocery, stationery, electric and plumbing accessories. The Council of the Center and City of Balat overlooks the highway. It is the apparatus that executes the policies of the central government in Cairo and runs the affairs of the center of Balat. It was established as a village council in 1972 to run the affairs of Balat and its surrounding villages and hamlets. Informants said that most of the duties and responsibilities of the mayor, the *omda*, who belonged to the big land owning family of *el khatayba*, have been transferred to the council since it was established, which greatly decreased the mayor's authority over Balat. Informants' accounts agree with Hivernel's (1996) in that the mayor was responsible for Balat and its surrounding villages and hamlets, and that he had economic, political, legal, and police powers. They said that the mayor also had authority over the social life in Balat; one had to take permission from the *omda* to get married, migrate to Cairo, build a house, or to drill a spring to irrigate the lands of medium size land owning families. Many informants said that the intervention of the state in Balat beginning from the 1960s has gradually decreased the authorities of the mayors and liberated the inhabitants from submission to them and the other big land owning family.

**Education**

The three schools of primary, preparatory and secondary education also overlook the highway. The primary and preparatory schools were established in the 1960s, while
the secondary one was established in the early 1980s. The percentage of educated people in Balat is high and the majority of parents greatly encourage their sons and daughters to join university in Cairo or in Upper Egypt, since there is no university in the governorate of the New Valley; there is only the Faculty of Education in Kharga oasis that is adjunct to Asyout University. Many of the teachers who teach in the schools of Balat and the surrounding villages have graduated from this faculty.

The majority of informants view education as a major introducer of change in many aspects of their lives, and consider it an important sign for modernity. As will be shown in chapters three and four, education has influenced their conceptions about what constitutes a modern house and how they organize and use domestic space. Though government employment is not guaranteed, due to the neo-liberal policies of the state, informants still see education as the path for good jobs and better life.

Middle age male informants whose parents and grandparents cultivated the lands of el Khatayba and the other big landowning family of Zakhira say that education in Balat and Dakhla was very limited before the 1960s. In Balat, there was only one school established in 1927, where students spent four years, then moved to Mut to study in a primary school for another four years. Those who wanted to join preparatory education had to go to Kharga oasis, and then to Asyout governorate in Upper Egypt for secondary education. Thus, it was only the sons of the two big landowning families who could afford expenses of travel and education. Informants also said that it was only in the 1960s that sons of the peasants could go to preparatory and secondary schools, when the government established such schools in Mut, the capital of Dakhla, and the parcels of five feddans each were distributed to numbers of landless farmers as part of the New Valley project. The availability of schools, free
education, and the income from cultivation of the five feddans encouraged more and more peasants to educate their sons.

However, because of the lack of transportation to Mut (35 kilometers from Balat), girls did not have a chance to join preparatory school until the end of 1960s, when a preparatory school was established in Balat. They were not allowed to travel away from home. To go to Mut boys had to wait for tractors or buses coming from Cairo or Asyout to ask them for a lift in return for some money. When the School of Teachers was established in Mut in the 1970s, sons and daughters of the large and medium-sized landowning families were the first to join them, with some others who belonged to small land holding families. Later, in the 1980s, a secondary school was established in Balat which encouraged more daughters, as well as sons of the small landholders to join them. Beginning from the mid 1970s onwards, other primary and preparatory schools were constructed in the surrounding villages and hamlets, enabling more and more inhabitants to educate their children. In the 1980s, another primary school was established in Balat and schools that offer technical education were established in the city of Mut receiving students from Balat and the other villages in Dakhla oases.

Informants said that many factors have contributed to offering the students of Balat and its surrounding villages a better quality education than what is offered in Cairo at the government schools. These factors relate to the social and economic context of Balat. The majority of the informants said that most of the teachers do their best in teaching as they feel that they are serving their community, to which they are connected through kinship and neighborhood ties. The wheat and rice they get from their fields as well as the poultry, sheep, and cattle they raise enable them to save good part of their salaries to be spent on products other than food. Moreover, the
landless male teachers have other off-farm jobs that provide good income. Thus, teachers have other sources of income that save them the need to force students to take private lessons with them as their counterparts do in Cairo. Furthermore, as population density is low in Balat and in the whole governorate, the numbers of students are small, which ensures them better quality instruction.

However, teachers and principals of schools said that they lack many facilities, which hinders them from achieving the education quality standards required by the National Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation. They said that they do not have enough computers for all the students and that the existing ones are old and need to be replaced. They said that they have a meager budget to cover Internet costs, which restrains Internet use for education. Moreover they said that their schools lack the required facilities for science labs, sports, and other activities.

*Electricity*

A few kilometers from the primary school on one of the sides of the highway, one can see the electricity towers of Balat. In 1979, the government supplied Balat with electricity. However, due to the limited budget of the local government, electricity was supplied for few hours by a generator fueled by diesel, but the number of hours increased gradually through the years. In 2008, Balat was connected to the network of the high dam electricity, supplying electricity for 24 hours, a long-awaited event that all the inhabitants welcomed. Informants stressed that electricity has had a major role in modernization in Balat. They said that since its introduction to Balat, it offered new possibilities for people that improved their lives. Electricity enabled

3 The New Valley governorate measures 441000 kilometers in surface area, with only 180000 inhabitants (The Book of the Governorate of the New Valley, 2008).
them to have electric house appliances that made housework for women less hard than before and to have better source of lighting helping the students in studying their lessons.

Moreover, in the second half of the 1980s, electric pumps that bring the water from the surface layer of the ground were introduced to Balat. Most of the owners of older springs replaced their old diesel pumps with the electric ones as the latter have far fewer breakdowns than the first and have the capacity to pump more water. Importantly, the introduction of electric pumps led to digging new springs that enabled the reclamation and cultivation of more lands, which translated into an increase in the number of landowners and the creation of more work opportunities in agriculture for waged laborers and share-croppers, leading to more economic welfare. These springs have been dug and owned co-operatively by many inhabitants, who invested the money they got from their work in the Gulf countries or in Cairo in reclaiming some of the surrounding desert lands. A spring may irrigate 25 feddans that are sometimes divided between five owners, each having five feddans, or between two or three owners. The majority of these owners allocate sizable portions of their fields to cultivate clover in order to feed the cattle they raise to be sold in the market, which have yielded good money that enabled some of them to build reinforced concrete houses.

In addition, electricity enabled the people of Balat to watch television programs, when television broadcast was introduced to Balat in 1984. As will be shown in the following chapters, state television programs and serials, as well as Egyptian and foreign films that have been presented in the two channels of the
Egyptian television or in the Arabic satellite channels4 have introduced the inhabitants to ideas, discourses, and lifestyles which had an important role in shaping the inhabitants' conceptions of modernity in relation to architecture, use of space and other aspects of social life.

Crafts

One of the shops that overlook the highway is the barber's. The owner is a man in his thirties who descends from the family of barbers. This is one of the few cases of craft inheritance that still remains in Balat. Some crafts have become extinct, because of the flow of manufactured products from Cairo or from China, such as pottery making, weaving, and dying. In addition, due to the flow of manufactured shoes, handmade shoes became extinct. One of the sons of the shoemaker has a government job and a small piece of land that he cultivates in the afternoon, but uses the shop of his father for repairing torn shoes on Friday mornings only. The middle-aged blacksmith, who descends from the family of el haddadeen (blacksmiths), still makes some pieces that constitute parts of some agricultural tools, and he also has a government job. The carpenters still make some tools for agriculture, and also make items such as doors and windows; moreover, some of them make items of Western-style furniture. Decreased demand, education, and the availability of other work activities made the majority of the young generations of the families of artisans abandon their fathers' crafts.

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4 Satellite dishes began to spread in Balat approximately in 2006 - 2007 when their prices became affordable to the majority of the inhabitants.
**Daily life**

Leaving the high-way with its light traffic and few shops getting in to the streets of the city, one gets absorbed more and more in the quietness, silence, and peacefulness of the place. For most of the day, the streets are empty of people and vehicles. Streets fill up in early mornings between 7.00 and 8.00, when students, teachers, government employees, and farmers head to their destinations. Then again between 1.30 and 2.00, the streets fill again, as people start going back home for lunch. Once again, when siesta time is over, several people head to the mosque after the *azan* (call to prayer) of *`asr* (afternoon) prayer, while some children go to the *maqraa* (Quranic school) for their Quran recitation lessons, and part time farmers head to their fields on foot, or riding carriages led by donkeys, motorcycles, or their private cars. At sunset, the farmers and the children come back, and the mosques are frequented again for *maghreb* prayer. The last time when the streets receive such groups of people is the time for the evening prayer (*esha*).

There are three *qahwas* (coffee shops) in Balat. The first and the most frequented by customers is the one that overlooks the highway opposite to the bus station. It was established in the 1970s, yet until the present time, most of the inhabitants of Balat rarely congregate at it or at the other two *qahwas*. Male informants said that they and most of the male inhabitants have two occupations, thus they do not have time to go to the *qahwa*; after a long day of work, they prefer to spend the remaining time with their wives and children. Moreover, for most of the year, most of the younger male generations are out of Balat either studying at university or working in *foul* restaurants in Cairo. Most of those who go to the *qahwa* are the cattle traders who need some rest and drinks before they continue their journey or other traders for vegetables coming from Asyout governorate.
Female inhabitants generally stay at home doing housework, especially if they are married, unless they go out for work in the morning. A few women may go out in the afternoons and evenings to visit relatives or attend lessons of reciting Quran at the *maqraa*. Female students stay at home to study or help in housework. Thus, women who are frequently seen in the streets after `asr prayer and in the evening are often those young unmarried ones, who work in the shops, or the few married women who accompany their husbands on the carriages heading to the fields to help in some light tasks there.

**Shopping**

Every Wednesday, a market is held where vegetables coming mainly from Asyout are sold in addition to small amounts originating from Dakhla. Meat is also sold and a limited variety of fruit cultivated in Balat and the surrounding villages. There are no green grocers in Balat; the nearest ones are in Mut, the commercial center for Dakhla, where there are some shops for clothes, furniture, electric appliances, and kitchen utensils. For products other than vegetables, grocery, or meat, some inhabitants shop at Mut. Balat has only three shops for clothes and shoes: one for women's wear, blankets, and bed sheets; the second for men's wear, and the third for shoes and school bags. Unsatisfied by the limited variety of products offered in Balat and Mut and their relatively expensive prices, many inhabitants shop in Cairo, especially in Ataba, the popular commercial center near downtown. The availability of public buses going daily to Cairo at reasonable prices and having relatives residing in the capital make it easy to go to Cairo. Another alternative for shopping is offered by the vendors coming from Asyout Governorate, selling variety of products, such as vegetables, clothes, plastic mats, plastic chairs, and bed clothes. Moreover, for one or two months every year, the inhabitants of Dakhla, including those of Balat, shop at the
International Exhibition that is held annually in Mut, in which products from Cairo, China, and Syria are offered.

**Balat: from a village to a center and a city**

Finally, declaring Balat a center and city, *markaz wa madina*, in December 2009 has been a well received event by the people of Balat. They think that designating Balat as urban is an aspect of progress that will lead to more progress, which will translate into more welfare. They have been waiting to establish their main government departments, which means creating more job opportunities, and saving them the time and effort for running errands to Mut to sign official papers in the main government departments there. Being a city and center means that Balat will have its central hospital, which means that its inhabitants will not have to go to that of Mut. They expect more shops to be opened, which will offer diverse products to satisfy their needs. They hope that opening such shops will bring good income and prosperity, as they expect that the inhabitants of the surrounding villages will stop shopping at Mut and come to Balat instead, since it is closer to them. They have been waiting to have their dusty streets paved. Importantly, the people of Balat have been eager for the prestige of belonging to an urban place, to belong to a city not a village. A 38-year-old female informant who from time to time travels to Cairo to bring products for the shop that she and her husband own said: "It is better that I belong to a *markaz* not a village; people will stop stigmatizing us by calling us villagers." These words express a popular sentiment in Balat. As will be shown in the following chapters almost all informants associate urbanity with modernity.

In conclusion, the changes in the architecture of Balat have resulted from the interaction of various factors. The changing material, political, economic, and social conditions in Balat have produced a different shape for New Balat and different types
of houses from the ones of Old Balat. The state policies and measures aiming at modernizing agriculture and other aspects of social life in the New Valley beginning from 1959 with the initiation of the New Valley project have led to profound changes in many fields, one of which is that of architecture. As will be shown in detail in the following chapters, the process of modernization in Balat, increased communication with Cairo, and media influence have largely contributed to how the inhabitants perceive modernity and desire different types of houses.
Chapter Three: Architectural change in Balat

In this chapter, I describe the types of houses in Old and New Balat in detail, showing the reasons for the emergence of each type. I show to what extent the inhabitants' choices for the types that prevail in New Balat have been informed by the prevalent discourses on modernity and state policies concerning architecture, and to what extent such choices have come as responses to practical needs and changing circumstances. Furthermore, I show how people selectively appropriate some of these discourses to serve their needs and purposes. I demonstrate that the adoption of the International Style or other modern styles for the houses in New Balat has not translated in complete homogenization, since the organization and use of space in these houses reveal the continuity of indigenous rural lifestyles.

I show that, contrary to the conceptualization in Western thought of modernity as a condition that is discontinuous with the past and tradition (Harvey, 1989), as a new era that has no relation with the past, a past that is always seen as stable (Latour, 1993), modernity in Balat reveals that the past and present, the traditional and modern are intertwined. As Latour contends, any tradition is in a process of continuous change. The past can be a component of the present and the future in many different and complex ways; it is not absolutely repeated nor completely ignored. I demonstrate how in their efforts to have houses that are more durable and more comfortable, the inhabitants of Balat have been active in adopting and adapting newly introduced architectural elements without abandoning traditions that they continue to see as relevant. In the mud-brick and white limestone brick houses of New Balat, the long-established local building techniques and local building materials have been enhanced by the use of industrially manufactured materials. In addition, even in the reinforced concrete houses whose styles, materials and techniques of building are
discontinuous with the architectural traditions of Balat, the ways the inhabitants organize and use space in these houses reveal certain continuities with tradition.

I have identified five architectural types of houses in Balat, which include the mud-brick houses of Old Balat and four types in New Balat. These are: mud-brick houses with lime-colored paint, mud-brick houses that adopt the styles of reinforced concrete houses, reinforced concrete apartment houses, and white limestone brick houses. The description of the types of houses in either Old or New Balat is based on referring to the general and most common characteristics of each type, as each in itself has its variations according to the economic abilities, needs, and tastes of the inhabitants of the houses.

**The houses of Old Balat**

The construction techniques of the houses of Old Balat were inherited from ancient Egypt and adopted with little variations, while the style of the village and the houses reveals influences from North Africa and the Arab Peninsula (Hivernel, 1996). The building materials of the houses in Old Balat consist of sun-dried mudbricks, mud, acacia tree stumps, palm tree branches and leaves. Due to the limited space, the rooms of the houses are small. The thickness of the wall in the ground floor is approximately 55cm in order to be strong and to insulate excessive heat or cold. It decreases to 40cm in the first floor and to 25 or 20cm. in the fence of the terrace, so that the fence and the first floor walls do not put much pressure on the ground floor's

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5 The inhabitants of Balat call a house of this type "a mud-brick house with a modern style", *beit tab naïy teraz hadith* (بيت طوب ني طراز حديث).
ones. The heights of the walls are between 2-2.5 meters; if they are higher than that, they may fall. The roof is made of six layers. Firstly, some acacia tree stumps are placed on the tops of the mud-brick walls. Above them are lain palm-tree branches stripped of their leaves. If there is a space between the tree stumps and the palm branches, they are filled with mud. The third layer consists of the leaves of the palm trees or reeds. The fourth layer consists of mud, and above it is a layer of mud bricks, which are in turn covered by a layer of mud.

The houses from outside

The original appearance of the first-floor walls is that they are plastered with white mud, (the evolution that happened later beginning from the 1970s is that some inhabitants preferred to put above the white mud layer another layer of white, light blue, or yellow lime paint). If the owner of a house made pilgrimage to Mecca, the first-floor outside walls are given lime-colored paint, and above it the owner has verses of the Holy Quran, Sufi poems, and the year of his pilgrimage written.

There are very small windows in the first floor; their small size is meant to minimize the amount of heat and sand while allowing air and light. The door is made from acacia tree wood (see photo n. 4). Between the first and second floors on the upper part of the walls, there are some artistic motifs that are made by certain arrangements of mud bricks, such as the squares and the triangles. The fence of the terrace might be with holes taking the shapes of squares or rectangles, or without holes, but have on their top palm trees’ leaves inserted on the edges crowning them (see photo n. 5).
The houses from inside

The floor is given a layer of mud that is covered by sand poured on it to cover dust and to give a pleasant look. The inner walls are given a white mud polish. When you enter from the door of a house, you find yourself in the living room, which is called the *saqifa*. Today, the floor of the room is covered by an industrially manufactured plastic mat, on which are placed some pillows to sit on, which are made by the housewife. Mats used to be handmade by craftsmen from the branches of a local plant called *samar*; however, the flow of manufactured plastic ones from Cairo from the late 1970s onwards decreased the demand for the local ones, which led to their extinction. The *saqifa* was and is still the room that receives the relatives of the family or the close friends of the husband in contrast to the guest room that is called the *mandara* or the *mag'ad* that receives non-relative male visitors for the husband. This room is situated near the door of the house. It used to be furnished by a mat on which a mattress and pillows were put. Later, from the late 1970s, in some of the houses, other items replaced these, such as moderate-level local versions of Western-style chairs and couches, which are made in Balat or Cairo.

The kitchen used to be situated at the end of the *saqifa*. They used to be separated by a half wall. The kitchen had in one of its corners a constructed mud-brick stove called *kanoun* that was lit by wood from trees. In another corner, there was a small millstone for grinding wheat, and pottery utensils for cooking and serving food. However, in the houses that are still inhabited, the kitchen is transferred to one of the side rooms that used to be a storage room for grains. The purpose is to widen the *saqifa* that has the TV set and the receiver of satellite channels placed in one of its corners; some families prefer to have their meals in the *saqifa* while watching TV instead of eating in the kitchen. The low round table (*tabliyya*) on which food is
served, and around which the family members sit on the pillows, would then be brought from the kitchen and put in the *saqifa*. Another reason for moving the kitchen is to allocate an independent room for it to have more space to put the gas stove with its accompanying gas tube and wooden or metal cupboards. Old female informants said that the gas stove is faster, cleaner, and does not entail sitting beside it during the process of cooking; they used to sit beside the *kanoun* to add wood. They use the *kanoun* if they run out of gas, or if they cook a certain local dish that they believe would taste better if cooked by the mud stove.

Although pottery utensils for cooking have become extinct, as the women use aluminum pots and metal plates because they do not break, women still use the pottery jars for purifying, cooling and storing water. The pottery jar (*zeir*) is essential for purifying water from iron, and the smaller jars are used for cooling and storing water. Though all the houses in old Balat have refrigerators, some families would prefer to cool the water by the jars not by the fridge. They buy these jars from the village of *el Qasr*, as the potter of Balat died long ago and nobody replaced him. The kitchen used to be called the *haza*; due to increased communication with Cairo and television influence, it has been renamed as the *matbakh*.

In the ground floor also there is one or two rooms for storing grains and agriculture tools, which were also used for sleeping. Beside the room of the guests, there is a very small room, which is the drainage room for the bathroom that is situated exactly above it in the first floor.

When you reach the top of the stairway, made of mud brick, to the first floor, you find yourself in the room called the *mijlas*, which is exactly above the room in the first floor called the *saqifa*. The *mijlas* is used as a living room and sometimes for sleeping. The number of bedrooms that surround the *mijlas* varies from one house to
another according to the size of the family and the house. Bedrooms used to be furnished with mats, blankets and pillows. Clothes used to be hung on a palm-tree branch that was put between two walls. Now, bedrooms are furnished with moderate level Western-style beds and wardrobes made in Dakhla or Cairo. This floor has the small room of the toilet. The toilet consists only of a hole in the ground. There is no running water inside the houses, as any leakage of water will cause damage to the buildings that are constructed from mud. Until the 1970s, the inhabitants would bring water in pottery jars from a water wheel 300 meters far from the houses. In the 1970s, the government established public taps in several sites on the perimeter of the village. Later, the remaining inhabitants have made connections from those taps to other taps put above basins constructed from cement in front of their houses. In order to have a bath, the inhabitants put the water in buckets and take them with a copper wash bowel (tesht) to one of the rooms of the house.

As for the terrace, it contains a mud oven, which is still used in the present time for baking the kind of bread known as eish shamsi (sun bread), a mud stove for cooking in the summer, several mud jars to store cereals called the dwerat, and a mud hut to raise chickens and ducks (see photos n. 19-20). Some women use also a gas oven for making the second kind of bread known as eish merharah. The lighting of the houses depended on the sun in the daylight and on candles and gas lamps in the night until the government supplied Balat with electricity in 1979.

The houses of the big land owners Zakhira and el Khatayba were similar in design and size to the houses of the peasants who cultivated their lands; the only difference was that they had beds, mattresses, and wooden boxes for keeping clothes, while the peasants did not, as they did not have the money to buy such items.
The houses of Old Balat used to be inhabited by extended families including the husband and wife, their children, and the wives and children of married sons. The authority to make decisions was in the hands of the father. The oldest son would take such a role after the death of his father. The mother was responsible for managing the house, and assigning tasks to the wives of her sons; after her death the wife of the older son would take this role. In the present time, as the majority of the inhabitants left the old village, those who remain are some older couples and widows who are attached to the place and would not like to move to one of their sons houses in New Balat, or some families who do not have enough money to build new houses, so they continue to live there with the unmarried sons and daughters. However, due to education, the influence of television, traveling to and working in Cairo, fathers and mothers consult their sons and daughters before taking decisions.

Having described the houses, it is time now to know the views of the inhabitants about their houses. Some of the older inhabitants like to stay in their houses in Old Balat. They said that having spent all their life in theses houses, they are attached to them and do not like to leave them. However, others said that if they had had money, they would have built new houses in New Balat. Younger generations dream of building new reinforced concrete or white limestone brick houses. When asked why she did not like her house, a 52-year-old housewife replied: "The house is narrow… The bathroom is narrow… There is no running water." To the same question another female informant who is 37 years old and who works as a cleaner in one of the government institutions answered:"My brother is married to a Cairene woman. He does not bring her to visit us, because the appearance of the house is not suitable, and the bathroom is not suitable; it is a hole in the ground". I asked her:"What is the type of house you dream to have?" She said:"A white
limestone house, whose floor is paved with flagstone… I hope I have a house similar to the reinforced concrete one … If a guest comes, they will find a good house. If a guest comes, it is enough that they find a clean bathroom. Now, I feel embarrassed to invite anybody to spend the night in our house”.

When I asked Salma, a 23-year-old informant, who has a certificate of technical education but is not employed, about the type of house she would like to have when she gets married, she said:”Either a white limestone house or a reinforced concrete one. I want a flat whose floor is paved with flagstone and whose walls are painted with oil paints, because plastering is exhausting; it entails kneading of mud, carrying of sand, and plastering.” I spent a whole day with Salma and her family. Salma and her sister in law, who resides with her in-laws when her husband is in Cairo, were plastering the walls and the floor of their house. I observed the whole process of plastering and helped a little, as I found it difficult for my hands to continue kneading mud and plastering the walls. I realized how exhausting the tasks of plastering are. The day before the day of plastering, Salma and her mother firstly took their farm carriage to the sand dunes. They filled the carriage with sand, and when they got home transferred it in baskets. The unmarried son who cultivates the small portion of the family land brought the mud from the field. Salma and her sister in law exerted a lot of effort kneading the mud with water and sand, which they had to sieve first to take out small bits of gravel. The process of kneading the mud, plastering, and pouring sand on the floor after the mud became dry took a whole day's work (see photos n. 21-23).

Observing the houses of Old Balat and the daily life inside these houses, as well as listening to the inhabitants' points of view, I realized why they are dreaming of having new houses that are not built from mud. Women want houses that are easy to
clean and maintain, more spacious and more comfortable, and that have running water and better bathrooms. The ways the houses of Old Balat were designed and built were responses to certain conditions and needs, many of which no longer exist now. For example, the walls and the floor had to be plastered with white mud because this is what was available in the past. Moreover, the houses used to be inhabited by extended families; plastering the walls was done by many women who resided in the same house who co-operated together in plastering, each exerting considerable effort. Furthermore, at the time of extended families, the majority of women had free time to do plastering as female education was very limited and did not go beyond the primary phase.

In addition, it is not only practical matters that make the inhabitants dream about white limestone or reinforced concrete houses; women as well as men have become to feel embarrassed to live in the houses of the old village. Comparing their houses, whose mud walls, roofs, and floor attract dust, with the new ones built from white limestone or reinforced concrete, whose appearance and finishing they see as nice looking and clean, make them feel that they are not up to the level of the others who live in these houses.

The mud-brick house with lime-colored paint

The houses built of mud bricks with lime-colored paint constitute the first generation of houses in New Balat, which began to be built in the second half of the 1970s. Their inhabitants are old-age husbands and wives and unmarried sons and daughters. These houses are built with natural local materials, adopting the same construction method and technique of roofing of Old Balat. Apart from very few houses that adopted the style of the ones of Old Balat, most of the houses of this type adopted a style that differed from that of the old village. For example, most of the houses are
horizontal and rectangular. A house of this type consists of one floor and a terrace. The outside walls were originally given a layer of white mud, but after some years, a layer of lime-colored paint has been added. The artistic motifs of squares and triangles of the houses in Old Balat were abandoned (see photos n. 51-54).

When I asked the informants why the house was only one floor, they said that there were plenty of lands with very reasonable prices under the hill; they used to build two floors in the old village because the land on the hill was scarce. As for the reasons for painting the outside walls with lime colors and abandoning the traditional artistic motifs, some informants said that their parents and grandparents plastered their houses in Old Balat with mud and decorated them by arranging mud bricks producing shapes of triangles and squares, because they did not have other alternatives; they used what was available to them from the surrounding environment. Increased communication with Cairo and Upper Egypt following the project of the New Valley brought new products and materials including the lime-colored paint. Thus, later in the 1970s, when the inhabitants began to build new houses in New Balat, they wanted to adopt what was new and to be developed. I was told that the arrangement of mud bricks in artistic motifs of triangles and squares, as well as plastering the walls with white mud had come to be seen as old-fashioned.

Attached to one of the side walls of some houses are the mud huts of the goats and poultry and the mud room of the mud oven. In other houses, these establishments are included in the backyard. On the terrace, there is the mud hut for pigeons and another mud oven to be used in the summer. Many of the houses of this type have some similarities in the outside shape but have variations from inside in the design, level of furniture and electric appliances according to the needs, tastes, and socio-economic status of their inhabitants.
From inside, some of the houses of this type would have the design of a long hallway on whose sides the rooms are constructed. The rooms are bigger than their counterparts in Old Balat, because the space under the hill is not limited as it is in Old Balat. The height of the walls is three meters. The floor is given a layer of mud, above which sand used to be poured. Nowadays, sand is replaced by plastic mats. The walls are given a layer of mud, above which a layer of lime-colored paint is added. The guest room in some of the houses of this type has a door that opens to the outside, besides the door of the house to isolate it from the activities of the members of the family. In some houses, it is furnished with plastic mats and locally made couches; in others, it is furnished with Western-style sofa and arm chairs of moderate level manufactured in Cairo or Dakhla. As for the living room, in some houses, it is furnished by plastic mats, handmade pillows used for sitting on the ground, plastic chairs, and a television with a receiver for satellite channels. In some other houses, the living room is furnished by locally made couches, as well as some pillows to sit on the ground. There are two or three bedrooms, which have Western-style beds and wardrobes; two rooms for storing cereals and agricultural tools or any other things; a bathroom; a kitchen that consists of a gas stove, Western-style wooden cupboards, and the low round table (tabliyya) on which food is served.

In many of these houses, the kitchen has a door that opens to a backyard (fasaha), on whose ground sand is poured. On one of the corners of the backyard, there is a constructed mud stove. Its use is complementary to the use of the gas stove. Women use the backyard for sorting grains, drying washed wheat, or preparing food together sitting on their handmade pillows. In another corner in the backyard, there is a tap and a basin. Moreover, the backyard in some other houses from this type
includes the mud and gas ovens, mud huts for poultry, and the storage rooms (see photo n. 55).

The developments that these houses have been witnessing through the years give us examples that contest the postulates of the meta-discourses of modernity that constructed tradition as static in opposition to modernity as a process characterized by constant change and discontinuity with the past (Harvey, 1989; Latour, 1993). The inhabitants of Balat have been modernizing their houses within their long established building traditions. For example, the kitchen, while constructed of mud-brick walls, has the part surrounding the tap and basin covered with ceramic tiles to protect the walls from water. The bathroom presents yet another example of how newly introduced techniques and building materials are incorporated with long-established local building techniques and local building materials. In the late 1970s, when such houses began to be built, running water was supplied for one hour only, due to the limited power of the water pumps; thus, there was only one tap and basin in the backyard or the bathroom. People would use buckets or plastic containers to store water, and would use a bucket and the copper wash bowl for bathing. The amount of water which would splatter the walls or the ground was very limited, thus the walls were constructed of mud, and the ground was layered by cement. Yet, in the 1980s and 1990s, when running water was supplied for more hours with more quantities, and a new drainage system was introduced in New Balat, bathrooms had to be modified to suit the new situation. In order to prevent water leak, the foundation of the bathroom was replaced by a new one that differed from the mud brick or sandy foundation of the rest of the house. It consisted of a mixture of sand, gravel, and cement. For the same reason, the sun-dried mud-brick walls of the bathroom were lined with baked-brick walls, which were given a layer of cement, and the ground was
covered by flagstone. In addition, a manufactured metal toilet (hammam baladi) replaced the hole in the ground. During my fieldwork, I noticed that one of the families renewed the bathroom by replacing the flagstone of the ground by ceramic tiles, and replacing the hammam baladi by a Western-style seat toilet (hammam afrangi), as it is more comfortable for the older husband and wife.

Many of the old age inhabitants of the houses of this type like their houses and prefer to continue to live in them, because unlike the white limestone or the reinforced concrete ones, they ensure thermal comfort; they are cool in the summer and warm in the winter. However, the unmarried sons and daughters want to have different types of houses, when they get married. Those who have enough resources said that they will build reinforced concrete houses; the others who have moderate means said that they will build white limestone ones. There are many reasons for this, some relate to the inhabitants' desire for more durable houses with minimum need for maintenance, as well as other practical matters, and some relate to the influence of the prevalent discourses of modernity. These reasons will be detailed in the following sections on reinforced concrete and white limestone houses.

*The mud-brick house that adopts the style of the reinforced concrete house, or "the mud-brick house with a modern style"*

The houses of this type began to be built in the late 1970s and early 1980s. While the mud-brick house with lime paint was the option that the fathers chose, the sons who were preparing for marriage chose to build their houses adopting a new style. The houses of this type are also built from mud brick, with the same method of building and technique of roofing, as the ones followed in Old Balat. Like the mud-brick houses with lime paint, they are also horizontal, constituted of one floor and a terrace, but their styles are completely different from those of Old Balat and those painted
with lime color in New Balat. Houses of this type are cubical or semi cubical. The outside walls are plastered with sand and cement, above which a layer of paint is put. Their styles are devoid of the artistic motifs that characterize the houses of Old Balat. The exterior and interior designs were copied from the one-story reinforced-concrete houses the government built in Mut, which were characterized by adopting the modern International Styles prevalent in Cairo and many cities in the world (see photos n. 56-60).

Mr. Maged, one of the former heads of the center of Dakhla, said that in the 1960s, a few of the one-story houses in Mut were built from reinforced concrete to accommodate the senior agricultural engineers who were running the project of the New Valley. However, due to the high cost of reinforced concrete construction, the houses of junior engineers and employees were built from mud-brick with stone foundations. The walls of the bathrooms were constructed from stone, while the first meter above the ground for the walls of the houses was constructed from stone and the rest with mud-brick. Yet, the exterior and interior designs of the houses were similar to the reinforced concrete ones. The interior walls were plastered with sand and cement, above which a layer of lime-colored paint was added, and the floor was paved with flagstone. These houses became models to be followed by the young generations in many villages in Dakhla.

In Balat, the first inhabitants to adopt this style were the sons of the large and medium-sized land owning families. Later, the sons of the small landowners and sharecroppers followed the move, adopting the same style for their houses. When I asked Mr. Abdel Malek, a 48-year-old secondary school teacher from one of the big land owning families, why he chose that style for his house, he said: "This type of house was introduced in Mut by the Institution of Desert Development .... We found
that it is a good type; it is designed by engineers, and those who lived in these houses were the agricultural engineers who worked in the Institution of Desert Development". I asked why though the house is built from mud-brick, he decided to give it this style instead of the style of his grandparents' houses in Old Balat or the styles of the mud-brick houses painted with lime colors of New Balat that accommodated the father and uncles afterwards. He answered:

There has to be change. Their conditions were different from our conditions…. Each period of time has its styles according to the situation then…. This type is higher in standard (arqa) than the older types…. When one sees something new, one adopts it to renovate what he has… there has to be change. One likes to live in a house of a different type; the house has a finishing typical to that of reinforced concrete houses, so that there is change and progress (tatawwur)…. The older houses are suitable to their circumstances…. Those who built them just built them as shelters…. With education and contact with others, there is change…. The house must have a developed geometric shape that is suitable to the reality we are living in…. The type of house we chose reflects that we have progress in our life, because the people who come from Cairo do not expect that we live in clean houses. The type we choose for our houses must impress the people who come to visit us…. We must be up to the level of the others who live in the other places, such as Cairo…. The people of Cairo think that we are backward people (nas mutakhallifa) who do not have any idea about anything…. They think we are Bedouins.

Asked the same questions, a 54-year-old informant from another big land owning family who works as a principal for one of the schools in Balat, answered:"I chose this style because it goes along with civilization (hadara) … all the houses are built with reinforced concrete…. Our houses must keep up with the developments of our age". Confused, I asked him what he meant by civilization. He said:

Civilization means progress, (taqaddum), which is the latest things (ahdathhaga)…. The general appearance of the houses of Old Balat and the houses painted with lime colors look primitive (bidaee)…. Their appearance is not good…. I receive guests who are government employees or guests from Cairo. Our community was a simple agricultural one. When education became widespread, civilization began to spread. In the 1960s and 1970s, our teachers and government employees were coming from Cairo and Asyout; when we visited them,
we found them living in reinforced concrete houses; the government has been building the schools, and all buildings with reinforced concrete.

The previous answers reveal to what extent the inhabitants of Balat have been influenced by state policies and discourses concerning modern architecture and modernity in general. They internalized the ideas of these discourses that associated reinforced concrete buildings and their International Styles with modernity, and the rural styles with backwardness and primitiveness. Though the government built some houses and a few administrative buildings from mud-brick in the 1960s to cut the costs of construction, they were given the shape of the International Style. Mr. Maged, one of the former heads of Markaz el Dakhla, said the engineers who designed these buildings were graduates of faculties of engineering in Cairo who were only trained on modern, Western methods of construction. These methods have been characterized by the use of mass produced materials, standardization of the craft of building, and disregard for indigenous techniques and styles (Brolin, 1976). The state discourse on modernity was largely informed by Western discourses. As Abaza (2006) states, modernization process under Nasser was deeply influenced by the Western model. Modernizing was perceived as the importation of Western products, lifestyles, and architecture accompanied by local modifications and production. She argues that although the state under Nasser freed Egypt from the British occupation, it was saturated with Western modernity’s tenets, without having an alternative program that would inform a kind of indigenous development.

However, the answers of the two informants also reveal that they are not passive receivers of discourses of modernity. They and many others in Balat have been active in appropriating them to achieve certain goals. Their choices to have their houses appear as if they are built from reinforced concrete reflect pragmatic use of these discourses. My analysis of these answers is guided by Wilson's perspectives on
imitation. As cited in Ferguson (2006), Wilson (1941) maintains that when Africans imitated Europeans in the colonial era, wearing European clothes, using European products, and adopting European lifestyles in general, they aimed at presenting themselves as civilized people who should have the right to be members of the modern urban world, and who deserve respect from Europeans and fellow Africans. Similarly, when many inhabitants in Balat chose interior and exterior designs borrowed from reinforced concrete houses for their mud-brick ones and furnished them with Western-style furniture, they meant to present themselves as civilized people who are not less than the people of Cairo who think that rural people are backward and primitive. They wanted to dissociate themselves from that stereotype. By adopting the style of reinforced concrete houses and having Western-style furniture they think they become different kinds of persons who are modern and who are part of the modern urban world. This way they can claim respect in a world that views the rural and the traditional as backward.

Furthermore, unlike their parents and grandparents whose education did not go beyond the primary phase, the two informants and others of their generation who went to university and became government employees and teachers felt that the styles of the older houses are not suitable to their status. They wanted to dissociate themselves from the stereotypical portrayals of rural people as ignorant backward people living in primitive houses; rather they wanted to associate themselves with the community of modern people of the Cairene and Upper Egyptian teachers and government officials who lived in reinforced concrete houses. It can be argued also that those inhabitants who chose this style wanted to differentiate themselves from the others in Balat whom they saw as less modern, developed or urban, especially the older generations.
Through their taste for architecture, they show their identity and distinguish
themselves.

Like every sort of taste, it unites and separates. Being the product of
the conditioning associated with a particular class of conditions of
existence, it unites all those who are the product of similar conditions
while distinguishing them from all others. And it distinguishes in an
essential way, since taste is the basis of all that one has —people and
things— and all that one is for others, whereby one classifies oneself and
is classified by others (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 56).

In addition, the answers of the two informants reveal another important issue which is
that the changes in the material and social conditions in Balat have led to changes in
architecture. The two informants stressed that the older houses were suitable to
certain circumstances, many of which do not exist in the present time, and that change
necessitates different types of houses. For example, the uneven walls of older houses,
which I saw as aesthetically pleasing in contrast to the straight walls of the mud-brick
houses with modern styles, had that uneven shape because of the unavailability of the
tools that produced straight walls. With increased communication with Upper Egypt
and Cairo as a result of the developments in the means of transportation, new tools,
techniques, and materials were introduced. The inhabitants preferred to have houses
made of straight walls similar to the ones of the reinforced concrete houses out of a
desire for renovation and out of a view that houses with straight walls have better
appearance.

If the inhabitants who chose the styles and finishing of reinforced concrete
buildings were informed by the prevalent discourses of modernity, their choices came
out of practical reasons as well. Having the outside and inside walls of the houses
plastered with cement then layered with paint, and having the floor plastered with
cement then paved with flagstone had the advantage of freeing the women from
executing the hard tasks of plastering. It was the women's duty to plaster the walls
and floor of the house with white mud. As previously mentioned, it is a task that is
time-and-effort-consuming, especially when it has to be re-executed at least once a
year to maintain the walls and floor. Female inhabitants preferred to be relieved from
these tasks, especially when they became busy attending schools or working as
employees or teachers. More importantly, constructing the foundations and the first
meter of the walls from stone greatly decreased seepage of water for some years
before it began to cause cracks to the walls.

If the prevalent discourses of modernity which the then young generations of
Balat encountered through their interaction with Cairene state officials and teachers,
or during their university years at Cairo or main Upper Egyptian cities partially led
them to opt for mud-brick houses that adopt the style of reinforced concrete
apartments, they also informed their choices of the interior designs and styles of
furniture. I will describe some of the houses of the sons of big and medium-sized
land owners, then other houses of the sons of small land owners.

Firstly, I will describe four houses owned by sons of big and medium-sized
land owners; one works as a senior government official, two are school principals,
and one is a secondary school teacher. All are between forty-eight and fifty-eight
years old. These houses are somewhat similar in exterior and interior designs and in
the level of furniture. The owners belonged to the first generation to go to the School
of Teachers and university and who constituted the first generation of teachers and
government employees originating from Balat. As the following description will
show, the owners furnished their houses in ways they saw as suitable to their status.

In these houses, the guest room is situated on the left or right side of the house,
and its door opens to the outside near the door of the house. The guest room contains
a carpet, high level Western-style sofa and arm chairs manufactured in Cairo. When
you enter from the door of any of these houses, you find yourself in the living room, which is also furnished by a carpet and Western-style armchairs and sofa, but of lower quality than the ones in the guest room. This room has the TV and the receiver for satellite channels. The guest room opens to a dining room that has a Western-style high level dining table and chairs brought from Cairo. However, the inhabitants of these houses eat in the kitchen using the tabliyya, as they used to do in Old Balat in their childhood and teen years. The dining table is reserved for the Cairene government employees or Cairene visitors, when they are invited to lunch, so that they feel comfortable, as they are not accustomed to sitting on the ground around the tabliyya. Moreover, there is another reason for having the dining table, which is related to the prevalent discourses of modernity that portray modernity as related to urban and Western lifestyles; having a dining table gives a message to Cairene government officials or visitors that the inhabitants of these houses are also civilized like them, even if families do not use the table for everyday purposes. There are three bedrooms to have separate rooms for sons and daughters; they are furnished with carpets and Western-style beds, wardrobes, and mirrors.

When these houses were first constructed, the bathroom had mud-brick walls lined with cement, a floor covered with flagstone, a tap, a basin, a shower, and hammam baladi; later in the beginning of the new millennium, many inhabitants remodeled their bathrooms. Firstly, the stone foundation of the bathroom was replaced by another one consisting of sand, cement, and gravel to be more effective in preventing water leakage. The walls were lined with ceramic tiles; the floor tiles were replaced by ceramic ones; the hammam baladi was replaced by an afrangi one, and a bathtub was added. This remodeling process not only aimed at having a more durable, comfortable, and beautiful bathroom that is easy to be cleaned, but also at
presenting a modern image of the inhabitants to the Cairene guests. The walls and ground of the kitchen were remodeled the same way as their counterparts in the bathroom. The kitchen has a gas stove, Western-style cupboards, a refrigerator, and the tabliyya. The kitchen has a door that opens to a backyard that has the mud oven, a gas oven, mud huts for poultry and goats, the storage rooms, and a mud stove.

As we have seen, the inhabitants of these houses have been modernizing them within their building traditions. The local materials and techniques employed in the construction process of the bathrooms have been enhanced by the use of industrially manufactured materials such as cement with the use of other local materials of sand and gravel to make a new foundation for the bathroom. Similarly, the mud-brick walls of the bathroom and kitchen have been renovated by lining them with ceramic tiles. Moreover, some inhabitants lined the tree stumps of the roof with manufactured flat wood plates. Informants said that the added flat roof is easier to clean than the tree stumps that attracted a lot of dust, and that insects are easier to be detected and caught on the flat roof than on the stumps in which insects hide. Informants also said that another reason for lining the roof is that the flat roof looks modern like the roofs of the reinforced concrete houses.

The inhabitants of these houses describe the modifications they make as aspects of “progress”, which they sometimes contrast with "old ways" or "tradition". Their use of such a binary seem to echo Western theories that construct “modernity” and “tradition” as opposites. However, in practice, these constructions reveal that “modernity” is always part of a “tradition” and is therefore not its opposite. Thus, “modernity” for these inhabitants is both universal, in adapting styles used around the world, and particular, in serving their own needs and building on and modifying long-established practices.
When I asked the owners of the above described houses if they will pull their houses down and build new reinforced concrete ones instead of them like what some other inhabitants did, they all said they will not. They said that though their houses need constant maintenance, they prefer to continue living in them because they are suitable for the climate of the oases; they are cool in the summer and warm in the winter. However, they said that their sons who are planning to get married want reinforced concrete apartment houses. Two of the informants already have had two reinforced concrete apartment buildings constructed beside their mud-brick houses, each floor having one apartment for each son. The reasons for the preference for reinforced concrete construction will be detailed in the following section on reinforced concrete apartment houses.

As for the houses of the sons of small land owners, they take the same style, but differ in some ways from the houses of the sons of big land owners due to the moderate means of their owners. The first difference is that the foundations of the houses are made of sand and mud-brick not stone, because stone is more expensive than mud. For the same reason the walls are completely constructed from mud-brick as opposed to using stone on the bottom portion, except for the bathroom walls that are lined with red-brick. Some of the owners of these houses have university degrees and work as teachers or government employees, while some others have the certificate of technical education and work as electricians, plumbers, painters...etc, and many others work in foul restaurants in Cairo. I will describe four houses owned by a 34-year-old teacher, a 29-year-old plumber, and 42-year-old driver, and a 36-year-old teacher.

The exterior and interior designs of these houses have some similarities with their counterparts in the houses of the sons of big and medium size land owners, but
there are no dining rooms or tables; the living rooms are furnished with carpets, around which Western-style sofa and armchairs of moderate level are put. In one of the corners, a table is situated, above which a television and a receiver for satellite channels are put. The other rooms and the kitchens have also Western-style items of moderate level brought from Cairo or made by carpenters in Balat or Mut. However, I noticed that there are some variations in furnishing the living room between these four houses and others owned by older inhabitants. For example, the living room in a house owned by a 51-year-old electrician is furnished by a plastic mat and small pillows on which people sit to watch television. The owner and his family prefer sitting on the ground as they used to sit in their parents' houses in Old Balat. The bathroom walls in the four houses are lined with red brick and layered with cement and moderate-level ceramics; the ground is covered by flagstone or moderate level ceramics. Three of the bathrooms contain a hammam baladi, while the fourth has a hammam afrangi beside the baladi one. The kitchens open to backyards that have the mud and gas ovens, mud stoves, poultry huts, and storage rooms.

It is important to mention that three of the four informants intend to build reinforced concrete houses for their children. The driver already has a flat under construction in the third floor of an apartment building that gathers his two brothers and their wives and children, each family having a flat in the first and second floors. This reinforced concrete building lies beside the father's mud-brick house that is painted with lime-colors and the two mud-brick houses that belong to the driver and one of his brothers. The reasons for the preference for reinforced concrete construction will be detailed in the following section on reinforced concrete apartment houses.
The reinforced concrete apartment house

Houses of this type constitute the few ones built by the government beginning from the late 1970s, which were rented to some of the inhabitants, as part of a few public housing projects, and the many that have been built and owned by other inhabitants, since the second half of the 1980s. The majority of the inhabitants of the houses built by the government come from families of small land holders or landless ones. Most of them work as teachers and government employees. The majority of the inhabitants who built their houses come from families of big and medium-size land owners, yet there are others who come from families of small land owners or landless ones, whose houses took years to be built, due to the limited means of their owners. Some of the inhabitants who built their houses work as teachers, government employees, cattle traders, and owners of workshops.

There are two generations of the houses built by the government, the one-story houses of the 1970s and 1980s, and the multi-story ones of the 1990s (see photos n. 62-64). Due to the time limit of my ethnographic fieldwork, I could not include the two generations in my sample; I included the first one, which I felt is enough to give examples on how the inhabitants of these houses have been active in reshaping the standardized houses they received from the government to serve their needs. The reshaping of these houses and the spatial practices of their inhabitants show that living

6 One of the informants who works as a government employee said that his new reinforced concrete house took nine years to be built. During this time, he and his wife and children have been living in their house in Old Balat. Another informant who works as a teacher said his house took six years to be built, during which he and his family lived with his parents in their mud-brick house with lime-colored paint.
in a standardized reinforced concrete house, which is portrayed as an aspect of modernity by the prevalent discourses of modernity has not led these inhabitants to break with their traditions concerning the use of space, nor led to complete homogenization of lifestyles. Moreover, my sample concentrated on including several houses built and owned by their inhabitants, as these people willingly chose to build their houses from reinforced concrete, in contrast to the residents of the houses built by government, who did not have a say in choosing the building materials. I will show how the choice to build a reinforced concrete house is informed by the policies of the state and its discourses of modernity, and how it is also influenced by practical and symbolic matters. Furthermore, I will show how the inhabitants of these houses organize and use the space in ways that reveal continuity with tradition, as well as the adoption of what they consider as "new" or "modern".

*The reinforced concrete one-story house*

The first generation of government houses took the shape of one-story cubical buildings (see photo n. 62). The building materials include cement bricks, cement, and iron. The building technique is a foreign one that bears no relation to long-established local building techniques. In contrast to the thick walls of the mud-brick houses, which are typically 55 centimeters thick, the thickness of walls of these houses is 16 centimeters; these walls cannot insulate the harsh heat of the summer or the coldness of the winter. The roof and the columns of walls are made of reinforced concrete, which causes the houses to be very hot in the summer. The style is a copy from the modern standardized styles that exist in many parts of Cairo and the city of Mut and elsewhere around the world.

As the designs of these houses are standardized ones, there was no consideration for the specific needs of its rural inhabitants; thus they reshaped them in
ways that satisfied their needs, mixing between typically rural and urban elements. I will describe the modifications made by the inhabitants of two houses of this type. The two houses belong to a 57-year-old senior government employee and a 54-year-old school inspector. Behind each of the reinforced concrete houses, the residents added a backyard, whose fence is made of mud-brick. The backyard includes the mud-brick oven, a gas oven, a mud stove, the poultry mud huts, mud storage rooms, besides a shaded space, where the mud jar of water (zeir) is put. The inhabitants said that the fence and the establishments of the backyard were constructed of mud-brick, because it was cheap and available around them. A small part of the wall of each kitchen was pulled down to create a door that opens the kitchen to the backyard. The kitchen contains Western-style cupboards, a gas stove, and a refrigerator.

Moreover, as each house consisted of two bedrooms and a living room, the inhabitants constructed a guest room with a door that opens to the outside to ensure the privacy of the family, when there are non-relative visitors, especially, the men. They pulled down the big balcony of each house to build the guest room in its place. The room was constructed from red bricks, while its roof was constructed from tree stumps, palm tree branches and leaves, and mud-bricks, just as the roofs of the houses of Old Balat, because this type of roof insulates the heat, and is much cheaper than a reinforced concrete one. However, plates of imported wood were added to cover the tree stumps of the roof, giving the appearance of a flat roof similar to the reinforced concrete one of the rest of the house. The inside walls of the houses have a layer of oil paint and the ground is covered by flagstone. As for the bathrooms, the ground was covered by flagstone, and the walls with oil paint. Each originally included a hammam baladi, a basin, and a shower, but in recent years the school inspector added a hammam afrangi and had the flagstone replaced by ceramic tiles, while the senior
government official removed the *hamnam baladi*, put in an *afrangi* one, a bathtub, new basin, and new shower, besides replacing the flagstone with ceramic tiles.

The rooms of the house of the school inspector contain Western-style furniture of moderate quality manufactured in Dakhla, carpets and plastic mats. The living room is furnished with Western-style couches and arm chairs, on which the people sit sometimes, while for other times, they would prefer to sit on the ground, leaning their backs on the couch or arm chairs. In the house of the senior government employee, the living room was divided into two to create a dining room. However, the dining table is reserved for the Cairene visitors or government employees; the inhabitants either eat around the *tabliyya* in the kitchen or bring it to the living room to eat while watching TV. The living room and bedrooms are furnished with carpets and high-quality Western-style furniture manufactured in Cairo.

When I asked the inhabitants if their houses become hot in the summer, they replied that they become very hot, but they try to get away from the heat. The inhabitants of the house of the school inspector said that they bring bed clothes to the guest and living rooms and sleep on their ground, as these rooms are cooler than the bedrooms. The inhabitants of the house of the senior government employee said that most of the time they sit in the shade on a veranda they had it constructed in the front part of their house, or they travel to Cairo and stay with their relatives there.

*Non-government reinforced concrete apartment buildings*

These are the houses that are built by their inhabitants. They are multi-story apartment buildings. Their styles are copied with some variations from the modern styles, which prevail in Mut and many parts of Cairo (see photos n. 65-72). The foundations, roofs and wall columns are made of reinforced concrete, and the walls from red-brick (baked brick). The thickness of the walls is 12 centimeters. Houses of
this type include two or three bedrooms, a living room, a guest room whose door opens to the outside in some houses, a bathroom for the inhabitants and another one for the guests, and a kitchen whose door opens to a backyard. Some of the houses have dining rooms. The inside walls are painted with oil paint. Well-off inhabitants have the floor of the whole house covered with ceramics, while those of modest means have only the floor of the bathrooms and kitchen covered with ceramics and the rest paved with flagstone. Houses of this type are furnished with Western-style furniture whose level varies from one house to another according to the income and taste of the inhabitants. Almost all the informants said they brought the furniture from Cairo, because what is available in Dakhla lacks variety and is of lesser quality.

The trend of building with reinforced concrete began in the second half of the 1980s on a small scale, yet since the late 1990s, the number of houses of this type has been increasing steadily. At the same time the number of new houses built with mud-brick has been decreasing over the past decade to the degree that at the present time, few people build with mud-brick. Some of the reinforced concrete houses were built in the place of the inhabitants' previous mud-brick ones after they were pulled down and some were built besides the mud-brick houses of the fathers, while others were built further from the fathers' houses because of the unavailability of nearby lands or because the houses of the fathers are in Old Balat.

As I will show in the following sections, The inhabitants' decisions to build with reinforced concrete result from practical considerations and desires for prestige, as well as being informed by the prevalent discourses of modernity that present reinforced concrete as modern and the mud-brick as primitive, backward, and old-fashioned. However, it is important to note that building with reinforced concrete is also related to the change of the socio-economic status of many of the inhabitants of
Balat. New sources of income have become available; working in agriculture has been accompanied with other off-farm occupations; some teachers had the opportunity to work in the Gulf Countries; some inhabitants have made good money from cattle trade and others had bank loans. Furthermore, since many of the inhabitants studied at university and have worked as teachers and government employees, they have become to view living in a mud-brick house as not suitable to their status.

When I asked the informants who already built reinforced concrete houses and the others who intend to build houses of this type in the future why they prefer this type, most of them began talking about the practical reasons. Informants said that they want durable safe houses that are not threatened by water leakage. They said that many mud-brick houses in New Balat, including theirs, suffer from cracks in the walls resulting from the soil’s absorption of water that leaks from drainage pipes and water pipes, or water that seeps through the foundations of the houses after irrigating the small gardens of the houses. The cracked walls need constant maintenance. Why then are the houses of Old Balat still there since two or three centuries approximately? Informants answered that the old village houses do not have this problem. Firstly, the soil in Old Balat is a sandy one that is not affected by water as the soil in many parts of New Balat that consists of red clay that absorbs water. Secondly, the use of water in the old village was limited as there was no running water. Until now, the majority of the inhabited houses in the old village have no running water due to conservation rules. The foundation of the reinforced concrete apartment buildings consists of a mixture of cement, sand, gravel, and iron which prevents the penetration of water in case of any leak.
But aren’t there any solutions for the problem of soil? The majority of the people of Balat believe there are not. However, I knew from one informant who has good experience in mud-brick construction and from an architect and a civil engineer who come from Balat that it is true that the soil in many parts of New Balat absorbs water, but there are solutions for such a problem. The real problem lies not in the soil, as much as it lies in the haphazard way in which many houses of mud-brick have been constructed in New Balat. When the inhabitants started to build their new houses, they faced a new kind of soil they had no experience with. They did not make the effort to hire an engineer to examine the soil before they began construction. They did not make good and deep foundations for their houses. If the foundations were two meters deep and had consisted of sand and stone, the problem would have been solved. However, it is only a few who made foundations of sand and stone for their houses because their cost is higher than the mud-brick foundations. Yet, a few informants who made sand and stone foundations for their houses also complained from water leakage that causes cracks in the walls of the houses.

In addition, many informants said they prefer the reinforced concrete house because its building is not affected by termites (ardiyya), which cause damage to the walls and the wooden roof of the mud-brick house. The insects begin their journey beneath the ground of the house, and penetrate the walls until they reach the tree stumps of the roof and eat parts of them. When a house is attacked by these insects, the walls should be repaired, and parts of the roof or all of it must be reconstructed. The current solution for this problem is the use of an insecticide liquid made especially for termites distributed by the agricultural department in Balat. The liquid is put in the holes in which the insects live, but this is not always effective in getting rid of them. However, contrary to the belief of many informants that this insect
cannot penetrate reinforced concrete buildings, an architect from Balat stressed that it
can, and that he knew of actual cases of the insect getting into reinforced concrete
buildings. He said that the insect comes with the sand that is brought to be put as the
last layer, on which cement and flagstone or ceramics are put to cover the floor of the
houses. He said that the successful technique to secure the buildings from termites is
to pour the insecticide on this sand before the floor is covered with cement and
ceramics.

Moreover, some informants said that they prefer the reinforced concrete
houses because the mud-brick ones are threatened by heavy rain. Though there is rare
rainfall in Dakhla, it happens sometimes that heavy rain falls and causes some damage
to mud-brick houses. What is really more dangerous is that any large-scale leak of
water can cause the houses to fall down. One of my informants who works as a civil
engineer said that some years ago there was an accident in “el Hendaw,” another
village in the Dakhla oasis, that made people there abandon mud-brick construction.
Those who have high income turned to reinforced concrete; others with lower income
turned to white limestone brick. What happened was a big leak from an agricultural
drainage pool. The water flowed toward the village, which was in a lower site, and
caused severe damage to the houses.

Furthermore, almost all of the informants said that another important reason
for the preference of reinforced concrete is that the lands offered for construction in
Balat have become scarce and expensive. Thus, on one piece of land, one can have a
multi-story building that gathers all the sons of the family, as each son will have an
apartment with his wife and children. In mud-brick construction, one cannot have
more than two floors. One 67-year-old informant said: "People build with reinforced
cement and ceramics.

concrete because there are no more lands in Balat. One wants his sons to live beside
him not far away in *eshewash* (a nearby hamlet) for example…. We want the brothers to live beside each other. We like to make the sons stay together."

Another reason that makes people prefer the reinforced concrete apartment to the mud-brick house is that the first needs maintenance and renewal after approximately ten years or even more, while the latter requires maintenance and renewal every year, which takes effort and time. This includes repairing the cracked walls that were affected by the leak of water. The walls of reinforced concrete do not often get cracked. While the oil paint of the reinforced concrete walls lasts for years, the lime-colored paint of the mud-brick walls wears out after a shorter period. Moreover, female informants stressed that cleaning a reinforced concrete apartment is easier than cleaning a mud-brick house. They said that cleaning the oil-painted walls of the reinforced concrete apartment with water and soap is much easier than brushing the dust from the lime-colored walls of the mud-brick houses. Furthermore, they maintained that reinforced concrete apartments look cleaner and more beautiful than the mud-brick houses.

In addition to the previous reasons that relate to material matters, there are other ones that have symbolic connotations. Most of the informants who prefer the reinforced concrete house said that unlike the mud-brick one, it is "more chic", "prestigious", "the fashion of these days", "a kind of progress", "going along with the developments of our age". These expressions reveal that the choice to live in a reinforced concrete house is one of the ways that the inhabitants of Balat adopt to identify themselves as members of the larger national and cosmopolitan worlds of modern people. Moreover, the prevalent discourses of modernity that they encounter through their stay in Cairo or through watching Egyptian films and television serials present the urban architecture and life styles of Cairo as modern and superior in
contrast to vernacular architecture and rural life styles that are portrayed as backward and inferior. The influence of these discourses cannot be underestimated. When I asked a 55-year-old big land owner who lives in a mud-brick house that adopts the style of the reinforced concrete one why he built a reinforced concrete apartment building for his sons, he said:

It is true that the reinforced concrete is not suitable for our climate, but it is the natural evolution of things. My son went to university in Cairo; he does not want a mud-brick house. Our sons say that we are backward. He visited his friends in Zamalek and Heliopolis; he felt that he is not like them.

If these words show that the choice to build a reinforced concrete house is informed by the prevalent discourses of modernity, they also reveal that the inhabitants of Balat appropriate these discourses to serve symbolic needs. They are not blindly accepting these discourses. What seems to be blind imitation of the people of Cairo turns out to be rational techniques for presenting the self as modern. Imitation is partly about claiming membership in what is perceived as a modern community (Wilson, 1941, as cited in Ferguson, 2006). Thus, by imitating the people of Cairo through living in reinforced concrete houses furnished with Western-style furniture, the inhabitants of Balat dissociate themselves from the stereotypical portrayals of rural people as backward and primitive, and present themselves as civilized modern people, who are worthy of respect, who have the right to belong to the larger national community of modern people. Imitation is their rational technique to get ahead in a world that associates the rural with backwardness and the urban as modern.

Importantly, the inhabitants' choice of reinforced concrete is largely informed by state discourses and policies concerning architecture which associate reinforced concrete buildings with progress and modernity. As mentioned previously, state discourses have been influenced by Western discourses of modernity. The inhabitants
of Balat find all the government administrative buildings and public housing units in Balat, Mut and anywhere in the governorate and the whole country constructed from reinforced concrete. Furthermore, they encounter the prevalent discourses on modernity through their interaction with state officials. When I asked several senior government officials responsible for local governance in Balat to tell me about the developments that Balat has been witnessing, they spoke about the progress it has witnessed in many fields in the infrastructure and main services and considered the increase of the number of reinforced concrete houses as one important aspect of progress. One of them said: "The trend now is towards reinforced concrete construction… nobody will move backward to mud". In my interview with a senior government official responsible for one of the public housing projects in Dakhla, I asked why the government builds with reinforced concrete though, contrary to mud-brick, it is not suitable for the climate of Dakhla, he replied:"The senior engineers of the Ministry of Housing in Cairo tell us:" 'The government builds with reinforced concrete because we should be civilized… we will not return to the first centuries and build with mud…. We should be progressing not going backward'.

In addition, faculties of engineering in state universities teach modern Western construction techniques only. When I asked an architect and two civil engineers from Balat, who graduated from faculties of engineering at Asyout and Cairo Universities,(two of whom have important government positions in the Engineering Department of the center of Dakhla) if the curricula in their faculties included any courses or research about improving the materials of mud-brick, they said they did not. The architect said:

There is not any department in faculties of engineering that addresses the issue of improving the materials of mud-brick. They are short-term materials…. We will not move backward by using weak materials…. I'm a graduate of faculty of engineering; all that I studied was
reinforced concrete construction. They did not teach me mud-brick construction. It is impossible. As they say, shall we follow the other people who preceded us in achieving progress like European countries that are developed in the field of construction, or shall we follow what is archaic?!

These words as well as the previous ones said by senior government officials reveal how the state has been informed by Western discourses that presented modern Western building methods and styles as progressive in contrast to indigenous ones that have been portrayed as primitive and backward. Moreover, the continuous reproduction of these discourses seem to be serving the interests of certain influential groups, such as the Egyptian capitalist corporations whose business is based on producing the materials used in reinforced concrete construction. As cited in Zieleniec (2007), Foucault argues that in industrialized societies the dominant political and economic structures produced and diffused disciplinary discourses and techniques of knowledge/power aiming at creating obedient subjects who conformed to the values, rules, and norms of the bourgeoisie in order to ensure the continuity of the process of capitalist production and accumulation.

Before the revolution of 25 January, 2011, some of the businessmen who own factories producing steel, cement, and other materials necessary for reinforced concrete construction had close ties with the government and some were members of the government and the Parliament. They promoted discourses, policies, and projects that served their interests. For example, one of the government housing projects that is known as ibni beitak (build your house), which is executed in Balat and everywhere in Egypt, gives a grant of 15,000 LE to people to build their houses provided that they are built from reinforced concrete. A house in this project measures 70 square meters. The total cost of the construction of foundations, walls and the roof of the first floor without any kind of finishing ranges between 60,000 - 70,000 LE. In
Dakhla, some people who do not have this amount of money applied for the grant to build mud-brick houses, but their applications were refused. When I asked why the project does not support those who can afford mud-brick construction only, I was told that the engineers who come from the Ministry of Housing from Cairo to supervise the project said: "We are improving the country, not going backward; ibni beitak is modernization (tahdith)…. Those who want to build with mud-brick should turn to other institutions; we are not social workers". In addition, these discourses also seem to serve the interests of the academics, engineers, professionals, and contractors whose work, careers, and profits are based on offering their expertise on reinforced concrete construction.

Though reinforced concrete apartment buildings show aspects of rupture with the long-established local building techniques of Balat, as their styles, building techniques and materials are discontinuous with their counterparts in Old Balat, the inhabitants of these houses have not broken from their traditions concerning their organization and use of space. In spite of the fact that these houses adopt interior and exterior designs similar to those of the buildings of Cairo, yet with some variations in the facades, and though they contain Western-style furniture, and have up to date bathrooms and kitchens (see photo n. 74), they must have the backyard, that has the storage rooms, mud and gas ovens, mud stove, and poultry huts, as well as the mud jar of water. The inhabitants continue to have backyards established for their houses, because baking bread, raising poultry, and storing the wheat and rice they get from their fields ensure supplying their families with food at minimum costs, which enable them to direct their monetary income to other expenditures for the welfare of the family. I noticed that the inhabitants who pulled their mud-brick houses down have kept the backyard with its establishments (see photo n. 75). The others who built their
houses beside their parents' mud-brick ones use their backyards. As for those who constructed their houses further from the parents' ones, they had their backyards' fences, the storage rooms, and the poultry huts constructed from white limestone bricks because the white limestone bricks are ready-made so they will save effort and time in the construction process (see photo n. 73). Yet, a backyard with white limestone fence must contain a mud oven, as it is better than the gas oven in baking the local type of bread, *eish shamsi* (see photo n. 76); the gas oven is used for baking the type of bread known as *eish merharah*. The backyard also includes the mud jar of water (*zeir*) as it is essential for purifying drinking water from iron.

Other examples that show continuity with the past come from the use of domestic space. Though some of these houses include dining tables, these are also reserved for the Cairene guests, and the inhabitants eat in the kitchen sitting on the pillows around the *tabliyya*. The living room in some houses contains Western-style couch and armchairs in one part and pillows to sit on the ground in another part. Many informants said that they prefer to sit around the *tabliyya* in the kitchen and on the pillows in the living room, because they used to do so in their parents' and grandparents' houses. In addition, women always use the gas stove in the kitchen, but some of them use the mud stove in the backyard for preparing a certain local dish, whose taste they believe to be better when cooked by the mud stove. Moreover, when there is a wedding celebration, other mud stoves or white limestone ones are constructed in the backyard to prepare a large wedding meal, to which large numbers of people are invited. As cooking large amounts of food will consume a lot of gas, the majority of the inhabitants prefer to construct the mud or white limestone stoves because they light them with dead tree wood. The mud or white limestone stoves are sometimes complemented by other industrially manufactured portable gas stoves.
designed for big pots. Furthermore, all the above mentioned examples show us that living in reinforced concrete houses similar to the ones in Cairo or anywhere in the world have not translated into complete homogenization. The ways the inhabitants of Balat organize and use domestic space reveal continuity of some indigenous rural lifestyles.

When I asked the informants if their houses become hot in the summer, they said they become very hot to the degree that they cannot lean on the walls. Some of them said they spend most of the day in the mud-brick house of the parents. Some said they travel to Cairo and stay with their relatives. Others said they use fans, while some said they will have air conditions installed in the future. Many of them said that at night in the summer, when it is very hot inside the houses, they sleep in the terrace, as was the habit in Old Balat.

**The white limestone brick house**

This type emerged and became widespread in the last ten years. It has become the option chosen by those who lack the finances to build a reinforced concrete house and the alternative to the mud-brick one. Most of the owners of white limestone brick houses come from families of small land holders, or landless ones. The majority of them work as teachers, government employees, technicians, owners of small shops, and workers in *foul* restaurants in Cairo. These houses attempt to implement high-status reinforced concrete designs at a lower cost. The houses adopt the overall design of reinforced concrete houses but are constructed from different materials that are far less cheap than the ones used in reinforced concrete construction. Thus, the houses take cubical one-story shapes with a terrace and their interior and exterior designs are copied with variations from the styles of reinforced concrete houses, but the walls are built from white limestone bricks brought from the Menya governorate,
and the roof is built from acacia or casuarinas tree stumps, palm tree branches and leaves, mud, and mud bricks; the technique of roofing is the same one followed in Old Balat (see photos n. 77-83). The thickness of the walls in the first generations of these houses was 20 centimeters, but it decreased to 12 in the recent houses, as the size of the brick has been decreased.

The inhabitants who choose this type of house find it a good compromise that enables them to have what they consider a modern, up-to-date house similar to the reinforced concrete one, yet at a lower cost that they can afford. According to informants' estimates, a 110-square-meter moderately finished reinforced concrete house costs 80,000 Egyptian pounds approximately, while its white limestone counterpart costs 30,000. Though a mud-brick house of the same size and finishing costs 15,000 Egyptian pounds, fewer people choose to build such a house in the mean time. This is partly because it has come to be viewed as old-fashion and as a sign for poverty. Other than the practical considerations, which will be mentioned in the following paragraphs, those who choose to build a white limestone-brick house want to signify that they are modern by following the latest fashion in architecture, and that they are not poor.

From inside, the walls of these houses are given a layer of cement, above which a layer of oil paint is added, as in the reinforced concrete houses and some mud-brick houses with modern styles. In some houses, only the floor of the bathroom and the kitchen is paved with moderate-quality ceramic tiles, while the floor of the rest of the house is paved with flagstone, which is much less expensive than tiles, due to the modest means of the owner. In other houses the entrance and the living room are paved with ceramic tiles as well as the bathroom and the kitchen. The tree stumps
of the roof are given a layer of mud, and sometimes a layer of colored lime is added, or plates of wood are put under the roof to hide the tree stumps.

White limestone-brick houses generally consist of two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, and a bathroom. Some houses have a guest room, while others do not. In some of the houses, the guest room has a door that opens to the outside besides the door of the house for privacy reasons. The houses are furnished with moderately-priced Western-style furniture brought from Cairo or Dakhla. In some of the houses, the living room is furnished with a Western-style couch and arm chairs, while in others it is furnished with plastic mats on which pillows or small mattresses are put to sit on the ground. The inhabitants of these houses also sit around the tabliyya to have their meals either in the kitchen or in the living room. The bathroom in the houses of this type contains a hammam baladi or afrangi or both, a basin and a shower, but will not have a bathtub, as it is expensive, and because there is no space for it. When a white limestone brick house is constructed beside the house of the parents, the son's wife shares the establishments of the backyard of the parental home. When it is constructed further from the father's house, a backyard is constructed behind it; if no space is available, the terrace would be the alternative, which includes the establishments of the backyard.

When I asked the informants who live in white limestone brick houses why they chose this type, they said that the main reason lies in that they have moderate means, and that if they had more money they would have built reinforced concrete houses. The other reasons they mentioned are similar to the ones cited by those who already built reinforced concrete houses, which relate to symbolic considerations. As for the practical reasons, informants said that they chose this type of house because limestone bricks will not be affected by the water table that seeps through the
foundations of mud-brick houses, which causes cracks in their walls. Yet, an informant who works as a civil engineer stressed that what secures a house against water leakage is not the type of bricks but the type of foundations. He said that the existing shallow foundations for the majority of limestone-brick or mud-brick houses will not protect them from water leakage. He explained that if the soil, on which the house is built, is composed of red clay, the foundations for the house must be two meters deep, where red clay is thrown and replaced by sand. Unaware of this fact or lacking financial resources, many owners of limestone-brick houses made shallow foundations for their houses.

Informants also said that they chose the white limestone-brick house because the termites would not be able to go through the limestone-brick walls as they do in the mud-brick ones. However, I encountered one informant whose white limestone house was attacked by termites. As previously mentioned, one of my informants, who works as an architect, said that many people in Balat are under the illusion that termites cannot penetrate limestone-brick and reinforced concrete walls. He stressed that he saw actual cases of termites attacking these types of houses and that the only successful technique to secure the buildings from termites is to pour a special insecticide on the sand before the floor of the house is covered with cement and ceramics.

Moreover, informants stressed that it is difficult to build mud-brick houses in the present time because of many reasons. Firstly, the skilled labor in mud brick construction has become scarce. They said that there are a few people who still work as kneaders of mud. Kneading and molding mud is a very exhausting task that entails the kneader to use his feet in kneading huge amounts of mud with water and other components, and to bend most of the time to mold it into bricks. For a 150 square
meter house, approximately 60,000 bricks must be made. Compare this with the number of bricks for a white limestone brick house of also 150 square meters, which are approximately 7000 bricks made by a workshop. Moreover, most of all of those who intend to work as masons have turned to reinforced concrete construction methods, which also enable them to build white limestone brick houses. The construction process of a reinforced concrete apartment building or a white limestone brick house is easier than that of a mud brick house. The construction process of the first two types of houses enables the masons to exert less mental and physical effort, and to earn more money in less time than in a mud brick construction process. For example, the walls in the mud brick house of 150 square meters need approximately 60,000 sun dried mud bricks to be laid, while the walls of a white limestone brick house of the same size need approximately 7000 bricks.

Another reason that makes the white limestone brick house preferred to the mud brick one is that its construction takes less time than the mud brick house. The element of time is crucial for the many of the youth who work in Cairo. They come to Balat for short holidays, in which they want to construct their houses in order to get married. Approximately, in 2 or 3 weeks a white limestone brick house can be constructed, but the mud brick one may take more than 3 months. This is due to the many steps that constitute the process of construction of the mud brick house compared to the fewer steps of the construction process of the white limestone brick one.

When I asked the informants what do they do in the hot weather of the summer, some of them said that though their houses do not give thermal comfort as much as the mud brick ones do, they can put up with the hot weather by using fans. Others said that the custom for many couples in Balat is that the house wives spend
the day in the mud-brick houses of their fathers in law. The women of the family cook together, and their husbands come after work to have lunch and siesta. In the evening, the couples return to their houses, when the weather has become cool.

The white limestone brick houses give us other examples of how the inhabitants have been modernizing their houses within their building traditions. The houses adopt the styles of the reinforced concrete house; yet, they mix local building materials and long-established building techniques with newly introduced foreign ones. Thus, the walls are constructed from white limestone bricks from the Menya governorate, but the roof is made from tree stumps, palm-tree branches and leaves, as well as mud-bricks. The technique of roofing is the same one used in Old Balat's houses (see photo n. 77). Informants said that this type of roof is much cheaper than the reinforced concrete one, and is efficient in insulating the heat of the sun. Moreover, in some houses, the local type of roof that is made of natural materials is complemented by the industrially manufactured flat plates of wood. The flat roof is added because it is easier to be cleaned, insects can be easily detected on it, and because it gives a modern appearance similar to the reinforced concrete roof. In addition, though the building materials and technique used to construct the walls of the house and the terrace are foreign, they are incorporated with one of the indigenous techniques. In the houses of the old village, the thickness of the walls would be decreased in the first floor and the terrace to decrease the pressure on the ground floor walls. The same technique is adopted in constructing the walls of the terrace of the white limestone house. As the white limestone bricks that constitute the walls of the ground floor, which is the only floor, are of big size and heavy, the inhabitants have the walls of the terrace constructed from red bricks as they are of smaller size and less
weight, so that they do not put much pressure on the walls of the ground floor (see photo n. 77-79).

In conclusion, my fieldwork results in Balat have revealed that the changes that its architecture has been witnessing result from many complex factors. People's decisions to build houses whose styles differed from the style that characterized their ancestors' houses in the old village, and whose building techniques and materials are either mixtures of local and foreign ones, or completely foreign have been rational responses to changing conditions and needs. The style of the houses in Old Balat that I see as aesthetically impressive was a rational response to needs, as well as material, social, and economic conditions in the past, many of which no longer exist. Moreover, the inhabitants' choices have largely been informed by state policies and discourses concerning modern architecture and modernity in general, as well as by similar discourses they encounter through their stay in Cairo or through exposure to media products. These discourses present reinforced concrete buildings as modern and the mud-brick ones as primitive, backward, and old-fashioned. They present the urban architecture and life styles of Cairo and Western countries as modern and superior in contrast to vernacular architecture and rural life styles that are portrayed as backward and inferior. However, the inhabitants have not been passive receivers of these discourses. They have been active in appropriating some of these discourses to serve their own purposes presenting themselves as modern civilized people who deserve respect and who should be members in the national or cosmopolitan community of modern people.

Furthermore, the inhabitants' adoption and appropriation of newly introduced architectural elements have not led them to break from their traditions; through their efforts to have "modern" houses that are more durable and comfortable, they have
been incorporating newly introduced materials and techniques of building with local materials and long-established building techniques in the mud-brick and white limestone brick houses, which contests the meta narratives of modernity that constructed modernity as discontinuous with tradition. These houses give us concrete evidence that “modernity” is always part of a “tradition”, not its opposite, and that “modernity” for these inhabitants is both universal, in adapting styles used around the world, and particular, in serving their own needs and building on and modifying long-established practices.

In addition, even in the reinforced concrete houses, whose styles, building materials, and techniques of building are discontinuous with the architectural traditions of Balat, the ways the inhabitants organize and use space reveal continuity with tradition. Finally, adopting urban lifestyles and built forms have not led to homogenization as the inhabitants have been appropriating these according to their specific context to serve their own needs and purposes.
Chapter Four: Conceptions of modernity in Balat

In this chapter, I present the inhabitants' conceptions of modernity. As shown in the previous chapter the notion of modernity partly underlies Balat residents’ rationalization for their preference of reinforced concrete houses or their choices of other types of houses that deliberately adopt the styles of reinforced concrete ones. Apart from the many practical reasons the informants cited, they mentioned others that relate to how they present themselves as modern people. When I began my interviews, I asked the informants first about the reasons for choosing the type of house they live in or the one they aspire to have in the future. I asked about the reasons for the increase of the number of both reinforced concrete and white limestone houses and the parallel decrease of the number of mud-brick ones. The answers I got often contained words and phrases such as: "the old houses" (el biyout el adima), "the modern houses" (el biyout el haditha), "the modern buildings" (el mabani el haditha), "the old buildings" (el mabani el adima), "the modern generation" (el gil el hadith), "the modern life" (el hayah el haditha), "the past" (zaman), "life in the past" (el hayah zaman), "the modern style" (el teraz el hadith), "the old style" (el teraz el adim), "the modern circumstances" (el zuruf el haditha), "the new circumstances" (el zuruf el gedida), "the modern appliances" (el agheza el haditha), "we are in the age of technology, progress, satellite dishes" (ehna fi asr el technologia, el taqaddum, el fadaeyyat), "people are moving forward" (el nas bititaddem), "people are urbanizing" (el nas bititmadden), "progress" (tatawwur/taqaddum).

When I asked the informants to tell me about the changes that Balat has been witnessing, the word progress (tatawwur) was the most common word they used in their answers. However, when I asked the informants what modernity (hadatha)
meant to them, almost all were confused about the meaning of the word *hadatha*. When I turned to using the word *tahdith*, some informants asked me if what I meant was *tatawwur*. Some other informants understood the word *tahdith* and used it when they began answering my questions, yet as the dialogue went on, they spontaneously switched to the word *tatawwur*. After I conducted some interviews, I realized that *tatawwur* is the most common word the inhabitants of Balat use to refer to the notion of modernity. They also use other words to refer to the notion of modernity, such as *tahaddur*, which sometimes they use to refer to urbanization and sometimes to refer to becoming civilized or modern; *hadara*, which they use to refer to civilization, progress, and modernity; *taqaddum*, which they use to refer to progress and modernity; *tamaddun*, which they use to refer to urbanization and modernity.

The inhabitants of Balat perceive modernity as change that they often view as positive. This change manifests in witnessing, experiencing or adopting what is new to them, as well as becoming urbanized. The majority of the informants spoke enthusiastically about the progress, *tatawwur*, they have been witnessing since the 1960s until the present time. They always made comparisons between their life in the past and the present, between what they lacked and what they have been acquiring. They described life in the past as "difficult" and "harsh", while described it in the present time as "better" because they have economic welfare, enjoy material comforts, and exert much less effort. Thus, they view modernity as a process of change that is mainly positive, because it leads to improving their lives. They give concrete examples for changes that have made their life better, such as the introduction of public facilities, utilities, and services, technological developments, the improvement of the standard of living, adopting new built forms, ideas, and lifestyles, and acquiring
electrical appliances. The majority of the informants view education, urbanization, and technological developments as central aspects of modernity.

The inhabitants' visions of modernity are informed by several sources, such as state discourses and policies that they encounter through interaction with government institutions and through exposure to state sponsored television and radio; discourses of modernity that they experience through their stay in Cairo; and global discourses that they experience through exposure to global media. The inhabitants of Balat internalize some of these discourses, while accept, refuse, and appropriate some others. They are not passive receivers of these discourses; they often appropriate them to serve their own purposes. The inhabitants of Balat selectively appropriate what they consider modern of the ideas, technologies, lifestyles, and fashion that they get from several sources. When I asked the informants what they meant by the words, *tahaddur, tamaddun, tatawwur*, one of the common answers was that each or all three words meant that one should adopt all that is new, provided that it is useful and that it does not contradict religious values or the customs and traditions of their community.

Although, the informants often view progress as positive change, they also said that progress has some negative aspects. They said that some of the ideas, images, lifestyles that they are exposed to through their stay in Cairo or through watching Egyptian or Western media products threaten their moral values and way of life. Thus, they resort to religion, as well as their customs and traditions to help them counter the negative aspects of progress. This shows us that modernization in Balat is far from Westernization or Americanization, a fact that discredits the stipulates of classic social theory, which maintain that processes of modernization in any part of the world would lead to homogenization (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993). Modernity in Balat gives another example that modernity means different things for different
people (Hill, 2010). Moreover, people in Balat see religion as an important part of their lives, and some of them view the increased religiosity in their community as an aspect of progress that goes hand in hand with the other aspects. The inhabitants of Balat do not accept ideas of secularization that call for taking religion out of the public realm to the private one. This contests the stipulates of Western social theories that predicted that religion will fade away due to processes of modernity, globalization, rationalization, secularization, and neo-liberalization (Berger, 1967; Gauchet, 1997; Weber, 1958, as cited in Hill, under review).

In the following sections I present the informants' conceptions of modernity in detail.

Utilities, facilities, and main services

Almost all informants view modernity as progress towards a better life. They consider the government provision of the utilities, facilities and main services as major progress, which led to improving their lives. Thus, paving the roads, transportation, schools, piped water, electricity, health care, and drainage are seen as important aspects of progress, which Balat has been witnessing gradually from the 1960s until the present time. They said that thanks to such services their life has become easier and better. Older and middle-aged informants contrast their lives before and after the introduction of such services. Abdel Fattah, a 65-year-old informant, said that before the 1960s, the road to Kharga was not paved, and that the trip that takes two and a half hours now by public buses or micro ones used to take 10 hours by a lorry car that carried people, as well as merchandise. Similarly, the trip to Mut that now takes 40 minutes by a mini-bus used to take 4 days by a donkey. People exert much less time and effort in the present time to do many tasks that used to be time- and effort-consuming. For example, Haniyya, a 70-year-old informant, said
that girls and young women had to bring water from a water wheel 300 meters far from Old Balat, and many of them were deprived from pursuing their education in the primary school in order to have time to bring water and help in housework. Now, piped water makes this task unnecessary and frees them to go to school.

**Technological developments**

Informants consider technological development as a central aspect of modernity that leads to progress in many fields and to the improvement of the standard of living. They told me about the major technological developments that they have witnessed in Balat that led to economic welfare and dramatically transformed and improved their lives. They consider the digging of deep wells by modern boring machines and techniques which they witnessed in the 1960s with the initiation of the New Valley project as major progress. This enabled them to cultivate more lands which translated into economic welfare leading to improving their standard of living. Moreover, they stressed that the technological development that led to the production of electric pumps is an important aspect of progress. Since the mid 1980s, the introduction of electric pumps that bring the underground water to the surface has enabled many people to install these pumps on the new springs that they have co-operatively dug and owned. This increased the number of landowners and share croppers and created more work opportunities for wage laborers leading to more economic welfare which consequently has translated into improving the standard of living.

In addition, mechanization of agriculture is seen as progress in that the tasks that consumed a lot of time and effort through manual work are now done by machines. Informants said that processes of plowing and threshing would take at least a week for each before the introduction of mechanization; in the present time, such process take few hours. Another positive effect of mechanization is that it
decreased the sons’ and daughters’ tasks in their families' fields, enabling them to continue their education. Furthermore, with the use of mechanization, farmers have found the time to complement agriculture with off-farm occupations. Machines that grind wheat and separate the rice from its straw are seen as progress by women. Salma, a 65-year-old female informant said that it would take her half a day to grind the wheat by the mill (*mourana*) and separate the rice from straw by putting it in a hole in the ground (*boura*) and hitting it by a heavy stone. Today the same task takes but a few minutes. Gas ovens, gas cookers, and washing machines are appreciated for the same reasons.

**Education**

Almost all informants consider the spread of education as another central aspect of modernity and progress. They highly appreciate education, especially those who belong to the first generations that joined the newly established schools of the 1960s, and who pursued their education at the School of Teachers in Kharga oases in the 1970s and 1980s to become teachers for primary schools, and then joined faculties of education in Kharga and Asyout in the 1990s to become teachers in the preparatory and secondary schools. They are now the principals of schools in Balat and the neighboring villages. They see education as an important element for modernization, because it develops the personality of people, enables them to deal with life, civilizes them, and makes them qualified for serving their community. Hamid, a 53-year-old principal of one of the schools in Balat, said:

> Education enabled Balat to have teachers, government employees, and senior officials from Balat itself; moreover, there are also engineers, medical doctors and university professors from Balat; this is major progress, because until the late 1970s, all of those professionals were coming from Cairo or other governorates.
Moreover, many people in Balat, especially those who come from families of small land holdings see education as an important modernizing element, as it gave them opportunities for social mobility, and enabled them to have a government job, which ensured them a monthly salary that complimented the income coming from agriculture every six months. In an interview with Amgad a 36-year-old ophthalmologist who studied at Alexandria and Ain Shams Universities, he said that people in Balat have progressed very quickly. When I asked him for the causes, he replied that education played a major role in their progress. When I asked him how education led to this progress, he said: "Education has greatly moved the society upward; it raised the economic standard; it raised the people's social standard and all aspects of life. Education has tremendously changed many things." "But does it have any negative effects?" I asked. "No." He replied. Education has also given prestige to many people. I remember how proudly three mothers talked to me about their daughters who study at faculties of medicine and engineering in Cairo and Upper Egypt.

However, some informants complained that the level of education is low. Though, they also see education as an important modernizing factor, they believe that its level is not high enough to lead to scientific and technological progress in Egypt, and that it does not train the students on the use of the latest technologies. Bahgat, a senior official in his fifties, who graduated from Cairo University, said: "University education is useless in the present time; it does not qualify the graduates to be up to date with the technological developments; they cannot compete in the job market".

*Urbanization*

The majority of the informants considered urbanization (*tahaddur/tamaddun*) one of the central aspects of progress. When I asked them about the changes they have
witnessed in Balat, the most common answer was that Balat has greatly progressed (tatawwaret giddan) because it has been supplied with the utilities, facilities, services, and products that are available in Cairo, and because its inhabitants adopt urban built forms and lifestyles typical to those which prevail in Cairo. A 34-year-old male teacher of Arabic language in the preparatory school said: "Balat has become like Cairo exactly; everything is available: schools, services, drainage, running water. There is no difference. We have televisions, satellite dishes, mobile phones. Everything is available. There is no house that does not have a mobile phone."

Ragya, a 48-year-old vice principal in the primary school, said: "Balat has very much progressed than before (tatawwaret giddan)." I asked: "How?" She replied: "The reinforced concrete buildings, the modern things (el hagat el haditha) such as the running water, the drainage, the dish, the computer, the internet. Now, everything has become similar to what is there in Cairo." In addition, a 23-newly-married female informant who lives in a reinforced concrete house that contained fabulously fashionable furniture brought from Cairo, said: "In Balat, we have progress, taqaddum, civilization, tahaddur; we are like Cairenes; the bride must have a full-automatic-washing machine and glass windows framed with metal (alumital)."

Samira, a 44-year-old female informant who works as a teacher in the primary school and who recently moved from her mud brick house to her newly built reinforced concrete apartment, which she proudly showed me, said: "We live the same way you live in Cairo; the ceramic, the finishing, and the furniture all are similar to what you have in Cairo."

Furthermore, many informants considered their adoption of the fashion of Cairo as one aspect of progress. In an interview about the change that Balat has witnessed, Hani, a 32-year-informant who graduated from Asyout University and who
runs his own shop that sells mobile phones, maintained that one important aspect of progress is following Cairene fashion. He said:

> When you see us, you cannot differentiate us from Cairenes…. People here like to know everything. For example, they like to develop themselves (*yetawwaru nafsohom*) in dress. We still wear *galabiyyas* in certain times or occasions, but people follow the fashion, *el moda*…. Now, we wear the Cairene dress: shirts, trousers, and training suits. My mother used to wear *galabiyya*; now women wear *abayaat* (ready-made long galabiyyas manufactured from synthetic fabrics that are worn outdoors), *isdalaat*, (long veils from the head to the feet, with two openings for the arms), blouses and skirts…. The world of fashion itself calls for progress (*tatawwur*).…. It is not appropriate that a woman who works as a government employee to go to work wearing *tarha* (scarf) and *galabiyya*.

All the above answers reveal that the inhabitants of Balat see urbanization that is guided by the Cairene model as a process that leads to a better standard of living, and that associates them with the community of modern people of the city. Moreover, the answers also reveal that by emulating urban built forms and lifestyles the inhabitants of Balat dissociate themselves from the stereotypical portrayals of rural people as backward villagers who are lagging behind. Many informants said that during their stay in Cairo they met many Cairenes who had the impression that they are backward people coming from Upper Egypt.

These views that associate modernity with urbanization and Cairene urban life styles reveal the strong influence of discourses of modernity which are prevalent in Cairo, as well as in many serials produced by state TV, besides films, novels, short stories produced by urban intellectuals, mainly from Cairo. Abu-Lughod (2005) shows how many of these productions have portrayed rural Egyptians, especially Upper Egyptians, as backward ignorant people who needed education and uplift. The heroes in such works are often urban educated modern characters who are dressed in Western-style clothes, and who play major roles in educating, uplifting, and modernizing the rural masses in order to let them participate in national development.
Abu-Lughod reveals that this trend of representing peasants as ignorant and backward has a long history in Egyptian political and intellectual life. Moreover, as Seymour (1999) shows, the majority of Egyptian films and television serials present stories set in Cairo or Alexandria. Such productions portray the lifestyles and concerns of the urban middle and upper middle classes to which the writers, directors, and actors belong. The two cities, especially Cairo, are portrayed as the heart of Egypt and as centers of modernity.

However, if almost all informants considered Cairo the model for modernity, they said that they take from Cairo all that can develop their lives, and try to leave out what they think is inappropriate to their morals and religious values. For example, the majority of informants said they shop at Cairo to furnish their houses and buy clothes of latest fashions. Their sons and daughters join university in Cairo, and may take courses of computer and English language in the centers that offer such courses. Working in foul restaurants in Cairo helped the majority of people in Balat to have a good income that enabled them to build houses for their marriage. Yet, they said they will not do certain things that the Cairenes do. Salwa, a 50-year-old housewife who has three daughters, said: "My three daughters are following the latest fashion, and I consider this a kind of progress, but we will not allow them to wear what many Cairene women wear of inappropriate items, such as the tight top, the tight jeans, and the short skirts (skirts that cover the knee)." In addition, many young male and female informants said that though they study at university at Cairo, they do not behave like many of the Cairene male and female students who mix with each other laxly. Moreover, many middle-age male informants criticized the young men who travel to Cairo to work in foul restaurant for imitating Cairenes. Wagdi, a 36 years old owner of a workshop for repairing cars, said:
Cairo has some negative effects on many of the young men who work in foul restaurants in Cairo. They come back with strange hair styles, wearing tight jeans and tops. They think that when they imitate Cairenes, they become civilized (muthaddereen) and progressive (mutaqaddemeen).... In Cairo, they learn to smoke, navigate in pornographic internet sites, and to have dates with girls.... They imitate many of the Cairenes, who imitate Westerners.

Many informants see themselves as morally superior to the people of Cairo. Thus, in contrast to the people of Balat, the majority of Cairenes are depicted as people who are less religious and less morally committed, care about their personal interests to the degree of harming others, and who have weak family relations.

Telecommunications

The majority of the informants consider the technological developments in the field of telecommunications as one of the central aspects of progress. They appreciate the availability of satellite dishes, mobile phones, computers, and internet. They see such mediums as their gateways to the world. For example, they see satellite channels as one of the main factors in modernizing Balat. One of the female informants who is in her late forties and who works as a teacher of psychology in the secondary school said: "The satellite channels have had a major role in modernity (hadatha)". I asked: "How?" She replied: "It introduced civilization (el hadara) to people". I asked: "what is civilization?" She said: "new styles of clothes, new styles of furnishings, and new ways of cooking." Many informants, especially university students consider the internet as an important aspect of progress because it provides quick and easy access to information that they need to do their assignments and research. In my interview with Safwat, the first person I met in Balat in 2004, who is a 35-year-old professor at South Valley University in Qena in Upper Egypt, and who is a doctorate candidate in Agro-Science, I asked him to tell me about the changes that Balat has witnessed. He began his account by talking about the mobile phone and internet. He said:
There have been changes in all aspects: the mobile phone shops, being a researcher, it is important for me to have access to the net…. Being a researcher, the mobile phone is important for me to contact my professors in certain times…. Here, we have witnessed tremendous progress (tatawwur rahib) in the last ten years. The availability of internet is progress. In 1999, when I came from Qena to spend the holidays, I used to feel that I get buried here, because I was not able to contact my adviser. The internet service is progress; I can contact my professors, but the service should be improved, because access through the land line is slow. It is a kind of progress that people now know about computers. My generation did not use the computer. When I was studying for the Master's degree, I did not know how to use the computer.

In addition, though the informants stressed that the satellite dishes and the other mediums cause positive changes, they maintained that they also bring negative ones, however, they acknowledged the fact that this depends on how one uses such mediums. For example, they said that mobile phones can be used for quick contact for family or work matters, or they can be used for harassments (muakasaat). Similarly the internet can be used for academic research or for watching pornographic images, which many informants named as a negative influence although none admitted to doing. Moreover, almost all informants said that they receive certain satellite channels and block others. They block all European channels that present pornographic films, and receive the Egyptian and Arabic ones, which are specialized in religion, news, sports, children, family, films, serials, songs, varieties, and culture. The majority of informants said that such channels open them to the world, and make them updated with the current events in Egypt and many other countries. They consider them easy means for education about religion, family matters, raising children, furnishing a house, cooking …etc. This shows that the inhabitants of Balat are active agents in appropriating what they consider as modern technologies and discourses to serve their own needs in ways that do not contradict their moral values, as well as their customs and traditions.
Another example of how the inhabitants of Balat appropriate the images and discourses of modernity that they encounter through satellite channels comes from their experience of watching Egyptian, European and American films and serials. The majority of the informants said that they enjoy watching these media products as they entertain them and introduce them to new ideas and life styles, yet, they stressed that they do not adopt all of these ideas and life styles; they select what to appropriate and what to discard according to their religious values, customs and traditions. For example, the majority of the informants who are in their twenties and thirties said that they like to watch the Egyptian films and serials to entertain themselves, and to learn how to behave if they encounter situations similar to the ones portrayed in such films. They furthermore watch them to get ideas about how to furnish their houses, and to update themselves about fashion. However, many female informants said they will not wear tight and revealing clothes as the film stars do, nor will they adopt ideas or life styles that contradict religion and traditions. For example, some of the informants criticized the makers and stars of many films for their adoption of some Western fashion and ideas that do not match the moral values of the Egyptian society. Amira, a 30-year-old general practitioner, said: "The directors and story writers of some films seem to be educated in the west, or take foreign films as the model to follow; some films, such as "Sahar el Liali" portray the relationship of men and women who live together without marriage as something ordinary." Egyptian movie stars are criticized by many informants for dressing like Western stars.

Some informants said they are worried that watching these films recurrently will negatively influence the young generations, who will eventually imitate what they see in these films. Yet, the majority of the informants said that their way to counterbalance the effect of these films is to inculcate their children with religious
and moral values. A 32-year-old female teacher said: "We teach our children what is religiously correct and what is not. Now, when my seven-year-old daughter sees unveiled women in TV, she asks: 'Aren't they Muslims? Why don't they cover their hair?'"

As for foreign films and serials, many informants, especially those who are in their twenties and thirties, said they watch American and European films and serials, which are broadcast by the Egyptian local and satellite channels, as well as the Arabic ones, such as MBC. Besides news and documentaries, these films and serials partly inform the people of Balat about Western countries as modern spaces. They perceive the United States and European countries as developed countries, whose progress resulted from scientific research, technological innovation, rational administration, and efficient management of time; they admire these aspects of modernity, as well as democracy and respect for human rights. However, they are critical of some aspects of the social life of Westerners, such as their disregard for religion, living together without marriage, revealing clothes, less respect for older people, and individualism.

Though some informants expressed their fears that children's and adolescents' continuous exposure to films and serials that portray these aspects may lead to their adoption of some of them, many informants said that raising the children according to morals and religion will make them immune to such influences. Moreover, the majority of the informants said that when they watch foreign films and serials, they select some values or ideas to incorporate into their lives and refuse others. During my interview with Muhannad, a 24-year-old informant, who graduated from faculty of commerce at Cairo University, and who works in a leading company in Cairo, I said that some people believe that the "west" poses a threat to the community in Balat, and I asked him if he agrees with them. He laughed and said:
The people in Balat think that anything bad comes from the west or from those Cairenes who are influenced by the west. One has a mind that enables one to judge what one sees. I'm a committed Muslim man. I take what is appropriate to me which matches my customs, religion, and traditions. I have a mind; I'll see what is useful for me and take it.

I asked Muhammad to give me examples. He said:

I watch a lot of foreign films. I learned from them to be at work on time, respect for order, keeping one's word, updating oneself about latest technologies. They have respect for humans. Look at their means of transportation, the streets, and respect of laws. Houses themselves are beautifully built. I benefit from their way of thinking.

I asked: "How?" He replied:

The logical scientific thinking guides to what is right and useful for humans, and the evidence is their scientific progress in medicine and engineering…. I examine how they have progressed (tatawwaru). But there are ideas that I will not adopt; I will not have a girl friend, or allow my sister to wear clothes similar to what Western women wear.

When I asked other informants if they adopt any ideas from the foreign films, the most common answer I got is that they like to observe the decoration, the styles of furniture and the kitchen in order to get new ideas for furnishing or developing their houses. For example, Khaled, a 36-year-old informant, who works as a teacher of science in the primary school said:"When I watch a foreign film, I like to concentrate on how they organize space inside the apartment. I adopted the style of the American kitchen in my house, but I added wooden windows, so that my wife, who wears niqab, closes them, when we have guests". When I asked him why he preferred this style, he said that it is suitable for the limited space of his white limestone brick house. Khaled also said:"I can benefit from some ideas in the American films and soap operas, but I reformulate them to suit the specific situation I deal with." I asked him to give me examples. He said:

When I was in the secondary school I used to watch soap operas like Falcon Crest and the Bold and the Beautiful, I would concentrate on observing how sons talked with their fathers and teachers. I would not stretch my legs in front of the teacher as the American students did,
because I considered this inappropriate, but I would learn from that to be bold when I talk to my father or my teacher.

**Position of women**

The majority of the informants say that the position of women in Balat has also been witnessing progress. Permitting the girls to go to schools, and pursuing their education at university in Kharga, Upper Egypt, and Cairo is seen as major progress. In my interview with Farida, a 36-year-old teacher in the secondary school of Balat, about the change that Balat has witnessed, she stressed that allowing girls to continue their education was an important aspect of progress. She said: "At the time when all the family lived with my grandfather, girls were not allowed to pursue their education after they got the primary education certificate. My two older sisters were not allowed to go to the preparatory school, but I and my four brothers and sisters went to university." "Why?" I asked. She replied:

My father got a job in Cairo. When he saw that Cairene people are keen on educating their children, he decided to educate us, and he separated from the extended family when my grandfather died. My grandfather believed education was useless for girls. Grandfathers had the monopoly to take decisions.

The female informants who graduated from university confirmed that their experience at university developed their personalities, because, apart from the knowledge they acquired, they gained experience in life from staying in other governorates, where they learned how to depend on themselves, and how to deal with different people and situations.

In addition, the majority of the informants said that another aspect of progress which is related to education is that women had the opportunity to work. Many female informants who work as teachers in the schools of Balat, and who cover various categories of age and social classes, see their work as an aspect of progress. They maintained that besides the income they get, which enables them to be
financially independent, and to share in house expenses, their work gives them feelings of self achievement, and that they have a role in serving their community.

Nawal, a 45-year-old female teacher in the primary school, said:

"After I had the preparatory certificate in 1979, my parents told me to either enroll in the School of Teachers in Kharga, or in the secondary school at Mut provided that I will not join university, because at that time, parents would not accept that their daughters travel to and stay at far governorates, such as Cairo or Asyout. I chose to go to the School of Teachers, because I wanted to work after I graduate; if I got the secondary school certificate, and then did not join university, I would not have had the opportunity to work. I admired the women who were educated and worked as teachers or government employees; they had prestige and a role in serving the community; I wanted to work to be like them."

Moreover, other female teachers said that work makes them updated with the current issues in society, which they will miss if they stay at home. Noura, a teacher in the secondary school in her mid forties, said: "Work renews your thought, knowledge, and communication with others." Many female teachers stressed that work made them gain experience in how to deal with different situations and people, which increased their self confidence. However, a few female informants who also work as teachers, and who are in their late twenties had different opinions about work. Though they agree with others that work makes women gain experience in life and brings extra income to the household, they do not see it as a path for self actualization. Mounira, a 28 years old teacher in the secondary school, said: "I have to work, because I need money to help my husband in house expenses. It happens at work that you get humiliated by the bosses and managers…" I asked: "But don't you feel that you gain self-achievement through work?" She replied:"I gain self actualization at home. It makes me happy when I cook a nice meal for my husband." I asked: "But don't you feel that you make something positive, when you teach the students well?" She said:
What will I gain when I teach the students well? It is nonsense to put my work before my children and my home; when work affects my children and I put them in a kindergarten, what will I gain? I will not be happy then. When I cook for my children and husband I feel content. I love to make unique things at home: to re-organize the furniture, to create a good atmosphere at home, to cook a nice meal for my husband. I love it when he comes back at home to find something different waiting for him. If any woman tells me that work leads to self achievement, I will tell her that this is nonsense.

It must be noted that if women are allowed to modernize through education and work, they are instructed by the family and society to be conservative in the public space. Girls must wear the hijab at the age of 13 or 14. They should not wear trousers, because these are considered men's wear; some will tolerate wearing them provided that they are covered by a short dress (a dress that covers the knee). However, young women can wear trousers inside their houses. Several times during participant observation and conducting interviews, I noticed young women, either married or not, wearing jeans, fashionable trousers, and training suits inside their houses. Moreover, though girls and boys in Balat attend mixed schools, because the small population would make it costly to establish separate schools for each sex, they are not allowed to stop in the streets to chat together. Samah, a 19 years old university student at Asyout University, said:

If a boy and a girl in the secondary school or university talk together in the street, people will talk. It will be bad for their reputation. Even if they are relatives or if they study at the same faculty, they should talk to each other at school or university on matters related to study, such as borrowing notes or photocopying educational materials.

Some university students stressed that they mix with the other sex at university in a respectful way not laxly as many Cairene students do. Some female university students said that their parents tolerate their receiving of phone calls from their male colleagues, as long as these calls relate to study matters. However, when I asked several young men and women, who come from various social classes, who either
graduated from university or continue their studies there, if they would prefer that restrictions are decreased, and innocent chats in the streets between young men and women are tolerated, or innocent friendships are allowed at university, I got similar answers. The majority of them said that they are convinced that such restrictions are good for both men and women. Mamdouh, a 28 years graduate of Ain Shams University in Cairo, said: "I agree with these restrictions. Girls must be controlled, especially, in these days, where we witness progress, where the media and university introduce them to ideas of mixing with men; it is good for them to be controlled". Sorayya, a 26-year-old graduate of the Faculty of Science at Cairo University, who is married, said: "At university, I did not talk to boys…. It is religiously correct that boys and girls do not become friends…. When I was at university, I refused to have male friends; I believe that the girl who wants to have a male friend has a problem in her personality". I asked: "Wouldn't it happen that you needed to photocopy notes from your male colleagues?" She replied: "All my friends were females; I used to photocopy notes from them, why would I photocopy the notes from boys; I had good female friends; one found those who were helpful around."

However, two other female informants had different views. A 19-year-old student in Faculty of Education at Kharga, said: "I hope these restrictions that prohibit chats in the streets are lifted. I hope people in our community change their conceptions, and begin to understand that innocent chats in the street do not reflect bad intentions." Nada, a 25-year-old unmarried teacher of art in one of the schools of Balat, said: "Modernization (el tahdith) and progress (el tatawwur) in Balat can be noticed in the material aspects of life: electricity, telephones, the standard of living, means of transportation, but I feel at many instances that people's way of thinking is
as it used to be; it did not progress." I asked: "Would you give me an example?" She said:

You expect from a teacher who graduated from a faculty of education a different way of thinking, but you find him thinking the same way as his grandfather, that it is not appropriate or it is shameful to speak with unmarried women. If I speak with a workmate at school about one of the matters of work, the other teachers will think that there is something, and that he will propose to me; they will not perceive our talk as part of the work process. They think this way, despite their knowledge of the fact that at university female and male students had work relations. But at my home, my parents' way of thinking is different. It was normal that I could tell my mother that a certain colleague was going to help me in my graduation project. She knew that she brought me up well; she knew that my relation with him would not go beyond study matters. This colleague could phone me at home to inform me about the results of the final exams at the end of the year; this was very normal.

In addition to the rules that prohibit chats in the streets, a similar rule organizes the relationship of engagement. The fiancées should not go out together. The man visits his fiancée at her parents' house, where they can talk to get to know each other. If they want to go out to buy something for their future house, they must be accompanied by the mothers.

One other important aspect of progress for women, which almost all informants talked about is that they are no longer forced to marry their cousins or other members from the family. If one of the relatives proposes to a woman, she has the freedom to say yes or no. Moreover, some married female informants stressed that having a separate apartment for the couples and not having to live in the mother and father in law house is a kind of progress. Nihad, a 27 year-old married teacher in the secondary school, who lives with her husband in their own apartment, said:

In my apartment, I have the freedom to live as I like. I organize space according to my taste, cook the food I like not the food my mother in law prefers. When I'm exhausted, my husband helps me in housework; if we live with my mother in law, even if I'm tired, I will have to do
housework, as it will not be appropriate that I rest and she works, and she will not accept that her son does some house tasks.

However, many wives, though having their own apartments, spend most of the day cooking and doing housework in the house of the mother in law, but they are not forced to do this; they have the choice to accept or refuse this way of life. In addition, many female and male informants, who graduated from university, mentioned that relations between husbands and wives have been modernized, due to the influence of education, media, travel to Cairo, and work. Unlike the situation at the days of their grandparents and parents, when the husband had the monopoly to make decisions, husbands nowadays consult their wives before making decisions, though in case of disagreement the husband has the final word. Some of the husbands who graduated from university, and whose wives work, help in house work. I was once invited to lunch by a senior teacher at the age of 48, whose husband is a senior government employee, when I noticed that he stood in the kitchen with us helping his wife in preparing the food. When I commented that some men may feel it is inappropriate to help in housework, he said: "Why shouldn't I help. My wife works also, and feels tired after work; it will be cruel if I don't help her. This is our way since we married."

*Plurality of tastes*

Many informants said that another aspect of progress relates to the availability of many options for food and dress from which one can choose what one likes. For example, Salem, a 55-year-old male informant who works as a principal for one of the schools in Balat and comes from a family of big land owners, said:

It is a kind of positive progress nowadays that we have a variety of dishes to choose from. In the past, we ate boiled food only; nowadays we know of new recipes from Cairo and TV. We eat pasta, chicken-fried steak, and many others; we eat food similar to that presented in hotels. We can eat meat any time now, we used to eat it in the feasts only, or when one was very sick. There is a variety of cloth and dress
styles to choose from; at the time of my father and grandfather, the whole family would have its clothes made from the same piece of cloth, so everybody wore a *galabiyya* that was the same style and color.

**Religion**

Religion is an important aspect of life in Balat. People's increasing religiosity there goes hand in hand with their adoption of what they consider modern ideas, technologies, built forms, and lifestyles. Contrary to the stipulates of social theories that predicted that religion will fade away due to processes of modernity, globalization, rationalization, secularization, neo-liberalization (Berger, 1967; Gauchet, 1997; Weber, 1958, as cited in Hill, under review), religion continues to have a major role in shaping the lives of the inhabitants of Balat. For example, many male inhabitants go to the mosques for the five prayers. There are two branches for *maqraa Dar el Arqam* (see photo n. 37), where some children, women and men learn how to recite and memorize the Quran. Children take lessons every day after the *asr* prayer, while adults take their lessons after the *esha* prayer twice a week. Almost all of the informants said that they watch the religious satellite channels for sometime during the day, and that they have greatly increased their knowledge about religious matters. They said that following the teachings of Islam helps them in organizing their lives and social relations. All the women in Balat wear the *hijab*. The number of *munaqqabat* (women who wear the full veil or *niqab*) has been increasing. Yet, this is due to the influence of the satellite religious channels sponsored by Saudi institutions, the instructions of the fully veiled teachers who teach in the *maqraas*, the influence of the students who belong to *el Gamaa al Islamiyya*, whom the female students of Balat meet at universities in Upper Egypt and Cairo, and mosque lessons in some lower and lower middle class districts in Cairo or Upper Egypt.
Some informants considered the increased religiosity manifested in watching religious programs, going to the *maqraa*, and knowing more about religion as "progress". Many informants think religion is the shield that protects them from what they considered the negative aspects of modernity. Some of them, especially the young and middle aged, feel threatened by the ideas, images, and values that they encounter through watching Arabic and foreign films, or that they encounter through their stay in Cairo. They fear that the children and young men and women will blindly adopt these ideas and values.

A few informants considered the *niqab* as progress, while many others did not. The *munaqqabat*, who are often in a category of age between 25 and 40, and who belong to various social classes, see the act of wearing the *niqab* as a higher devotional act of worship that makes them closer to God. They believe that a woman is a jewel that should be hidden from anybody but the husband and parents, especially in these days, when the satellite channels and internet have negatively affected the morals of men. They think that the films and songs presented in these media influence the men in that they direct their attention to stare at the faces and bodies of women. Moreover, some *munaqqabat* said that one of the reasons for wearing the *niqab* is that it helps them to control themselves in the public space. Abeer, a married, 30-year-old graduate of Cairo University and government employee, said: "I wear the *niqab* because it regulates my conduct with people. It obliges me not to speak loudly, and not to have humorous chats with men." However, many female and male informants, from different categories of age and social classes, think that the *niqab* is not an obligatory act of worship, and that good manners and behavior are more important than hiding the face. They criticize some of the *munaqqabat* for speaking loudly in the market and gossiping.
The negative aspects of modernization

The majority of the informants in Balat think that though modernization has positive effects on their lives, it also brought few negative ones. As previously mentioned, one of these is the exposure to ideas and life styles that the inhabitants consider as contradicting with religion and local customs, which they fear may influence the young generations. The other most cited negative effect is the weakening of social relations. Many informants said that they do not have enough time for socialization with their relatives and neighbors because they are working most of the time to be able to get the money that is needed to meet the requirements of modern life, such as a reinforced concrete house or a white limestone one, fashionable furniture, electric appliances, mobile phones, a dish, a computer, university education for sons and daughters, and clothes.

To conclude, the majority of the informants in Balat perceive modernity as progress that manifests in several changes that are mainly viewed as positive because they lead to improving their lives. They view modernity as a process in which they experience and adopt all that is new that improves and renovates their life provided that it does not contradict religion, customs and traditions. They perceive education, urbanization, and technological developments as central aspects of modernity. The inhabitants' visions of modernity are informed by various discourses from various sources. Though they internalize some of these discourses, they accept, refuse and reformulate some others. The majority of the informants in Balat selectively appropriate what they consider modern of the ideas, technologies, lifestyles, and fashion to serve their own purposes in ways that do not contradict their religious and moral values, as well as their customs and traditions.
The inhabitants' selective appropriation of what they perceive as modern goes hand in hand with increased religiosity, which some informants view as one aspect of progress. The majority of the informants said that they resort to religion, as well as their customs and traditions to help them counter what they perceive as the negative effects of modernity. This shows that modernization in Balat has not led to secularization as predicted by western social theories that associate modernity with secularization (Berger, 1967; Gauchet, 1997; Taylor, 2007, as cited in Hill, 2010). Moreover, the inhabitants of Balat have not become Westernized or Americanized, a fact which discredits the stipulates of classic social theory, which maintain that processes of modernization in any part of the world would lead to homogenization (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993). Modernity in Balat gives another example that that modernity means different things for different people (Hill, 2010). People in Balat show that modernity is not an end-point, to which all peoples seek to reach, but some kind of imaginary that mediates between what is local and what is universal.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

My ethnographic fieldwork in Balat shows that the changes in its architecture have resulted from the interaction of various factors. The changing material, political, economic, and social conditions in Balat have produced a different shape for New Balat and different types of houses from the ones of Old Balat. The state policies and measures aiming at modernizing agriculture and other aspects of social life in the New Valley beginning from 1959 with the initiation of the New Valley project have led to profound changes in many fields, one of which is that of architecture. People's decisions to build houses whose styles differed from the style that characterized their ancestors' houses in the old village, and whose building techniques and materials are either mixtures of local and foreign ones, or completely foreign have been rational responses to changing conditions and needs. The style of the houses in Old Balat that I see as aesthetically impressive was a rational response to needs, as well as material, social, and economic conditions in the past, many of which no longer exist.

Moreover, the inhabitants' choices have largely been informed by state policies and discourses concerning modern architecture and modernity in general, as well as by similar discourses they encounter through their stay in Cairo or through exposure to media products. These discourses present reinforced concrete buildings as modern and the mud-brick ones as primitive, backward, and old-fashioned. They present the urban architecture and life styles of Cairo and Western countries as modern and superior in contrast to vernacular architecture and rural life styles that are portrayed as backward and inferior. However, the inhabitants have not been passive receivers of these discourses. They have been active in appropriating some of them to serve their own purposes presenting themselves as modern civilized people who
deserve respect and who should be members in the national or cosmopolitan community of modern people.

Furthermore, my ethnographic research reveals that the inhabitants' adoption and appropriation of newly introduced architectural elements have not led them to break from their traditions. Creating "modern" houses, many people in Balat have been incorporating newly introduced materials and techniques of building with local materials and long-established building techniques in the mud-brick and white limestone brick houses. This contests the meta narratives of modernity that constructed modernity as discontinuous with and in opposition to tradition. These houses present an evidence that “modernity” is always part of a “tradition”, not its opposite, and that “modernity” for these inhabitants is both universal, in adapting styles used around the world, and particular, in serving their own needs and building on and modifying long-established practices.

In addition, though the reinforced concrete houses show aspects of rupture from the architectural past of Balat, the ways the inhabitants organize and use space in these houses reveal continuity with tradition. Importantly, people's adoption of urban lifestyles and built forms has not resulted in homogenization, as they have been appropriating these according to their specific context to serve their own needs and purposes.

I found that the majority of the informants in Balat perceive modernity as progress that manifests in several changes that are mainly viewed as positive because they lead to improving their lives. They view modernity as a process in which they experience and adopt all that is new that improves and renovates their life provided that it does not contradict religion, customs, and traditions. The majority of the
informants view education, urbanization, and technological developments as central aspects of modernity.

The inhabitants' visions of modernity are informed by various discourses from various sources. Despite the fact that these discourses largely influence peoples' concepts and practices, they actively reformulate some of them. The majority of the informants in Balat selectively appropriate what they consider modern of the ideas, technologies, lifestyles, and fashion to serve their own purposes in ways that do not contradict their religious and moral values, as well as their customs and traditions. My research reveals that people's adoption of what they perceive as modern is accompanied by increased religiosity, which some informants view as one aspect of progress. The inhabitants view religion, customs, and traditions as shields that will protect them from what they perceive as the negative effects of modernity. This shows us that modernization in Balat has not led to secularization, as predicted by Western social theories that associate modernity with secularization (Berger, 1967; Gauchet, 1997; Taylor, 2007, as cited in Hill, 2010). Finally, modernity in Balat has not translated into Westernization or Americanization. Balat has become modern on its own way. My ethnography reveals that people in Balat show that modernity is not an end-point, to which all peoples seek to reach, but some kind of imaginary that mediates between what is local and what is universal.
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مركز معلومات بلال 2009.
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